PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
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THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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EIGHTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 27 October 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified

Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first time and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the City of London (Various Powers) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be ordered to be read the third time;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords, and their concurrence desired thereto.

River Humber (Burcom Outfall) Bill *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the River Humber (Burcom Outfall) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Mersey Docks and Harbour Bill *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Bill [*Lords*] shall have leave to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Port of Fosdyke Bill *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Port of Fosdyke Bill [*Lords*] shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That the Petition relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stands referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power (Leicester)

2. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the latest progress of Leicester city's planned combined heat and power scheme.

16. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive reports from those city combined heat and power district heating feasibility studies to which his Department has provided funding.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): Consortia in receipt of grant-aid regularly advise my Department on their progress. The Leicester consortium expects to announce the results of its

studies early in December, and the Belfast and Edinburgh consortia are on schedule to complete their work programmes by March next year.

Mr. Bruinvels: As Leicester is the lead city, is my hon. Friend aware that the consortium is particularly keen to get the go-ahead to start finalising the arrangements? Is he further aware that Leicester has already prepared an energy action programme which will save householders and businesses in the city £10 million over the next 12 months? Will he, therefore, do everything in his power to support the consortium—I know that he has done so up to now—to ensure that the citizens of Leicester benefit from energy savings?

Mr. Hunt: I commend my hon. Friend and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) for their very strong advocacy of the merits of the Leicester scheme, and I await the report with eager anticipation.

Mr. Rost: Is my hon. Friend aware that some area boards — including the East Midlands and Leicester boards — co-operate constructively with city consortia while others drag their feet and find excuses not to co-operate? Yorkshire's lack of co-operation with the Sheffield scheme is an example of such action.

Will my hon. Friend accept that perhaps he needs to give clear guidelines on how the Energy Act 1983 should be interpreted, particularly the adopt and support section for district heating and CHP?

Mr. Hunt: I shall investigate what my hon. Friend has said. As a prime supporter of the relevant section of the Energy Act, he knows that it created a guaranteed market for the sale of electricity from CHP schemes and placed a duty on electricity boards to adopt and support viable projects. I understand that, in line with section 19, electricity boards are actively involved in evaluating a number of CHP schemes. The Leicester scheme is one example and the involvement of the CEGB in that scheme has been commended by the promoters. I shall, of course, investigate the points made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Janner: Will the Minister take this opportunity to congratulate Leicester city council on the excellent way in which it has made progress on the scheme, which we hope will provide cheap electricity for all sorts of people in the city? As the Government sparked off the scheme, will the Minister undertake that when we require major capital expenditure, in which major Government involvement will be needed, that money will be available and will not be withdrawn, as has happened in so many other instances involving Government funding for local authorities?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. and learned Gentleman should know, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) arranged for me to meet the leaders of the consortia, when I was able to congratulate all those concerned.

Geothermal Power

3. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about his Department's support for geothermal power.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy announced in June that the hot dry rock project in Cornwall is being extended for a further two years at an additional cost of £5·85 million. A further £1 million has been allocated to related support work.

A major review of the technology will take place next year. An important input will be an assessment of the commercial viability. I am placing in the Libraries of both Houses copies of a report on the economics by Dr. Shock of the energy technology support unit.

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend's statement is most welcome. Can he assure the House that so long as the research continues to be successful the Government will follow through the project to the commercial exploitation stage, and can he say when that might be?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right to stress the need for proper evaluation towards commercial exploitation. I am pleased to announce to the House that both RTZ and Taylor Woodrow are now involved in the project. I hope that other United Kingdom companies will participate in this challenging venture. It will be necessary to take major decisions next year and I hope that the necessary preparatory work will have been done by then.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is there a real hope that geothermal energy will provide a substantial amount of the country's energy needs? Many people place store on alternative sources, believing them to be infinite and large. How large is that alternative source likely to be, is it economically viable and will it make a significant contribution to the country's energy needs in the next century?

Mr. Hunt: We hope that a commercial prototype will be in operation, with industrial collaboration, by the mid-1990s. My hon. Friend is right in thinking that it will not make a significant contribution to electricity generation. However, the United Kingdom has established itself as the world leader in geothermal hot dry rock technology and has achieved the highest circulation rates in the world.

Coal Industry

4. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the decline in the total manpower in the mining industry since the end of the miners' strike; and how many of those men are still seeking employment in the industry.

Mr. David Hunt: Since the end of the miners' strike to 4 October 1986 the total number of men on colliery books has fallen by 46,732 to 125,631. No part of this reduction was due to compulsory redundancy. The output from the deep mine sector of the coal industry is virtually unchanged.

Mr. Hamilton: Does the Minister recognise how disturbing the figures are? What will be the trend for manpower in the mining industry in the next five or 10 years? Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that in areas such as Fife male unemployment is well in excess of 30 per cent.? Does he agree that the men who have been victimised by British Coal, although they were guilty of no offence before the courts, were subject to a measure of victimisation which is indefensible by any standards? Will the Minister make representations, particularly to the Scottish management, to cease such victimisation, in the interests of improved industrial relations?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the question of dismissed miners is a matter for British Coal

management. Instead of highlighting and distorting figures, the hon. Gentleman should recognise that British Coal is taking urgent measures to ensure that coal is more competitive. When the hon. Gentleman talks about a reduction in numbers, will he please recall that between 1964 and 1970, under Labour Governments, manpower in Scotland went down from 54,600 to 30,200 — a significant reduction of 24,400.

Mr. Lofthouse: What manpower figures is British Coal budgeting for in 1987-88? If that target is not reached by voluntary redundancies, will there be compulsory redundancies?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight the fact that there have been no compulsory redundancies. That remains British Coal policy. Future output will depend on coal continuing to win a significant share in the highly competitive energy market place.

Mr. Heddle: When my hon. Friend visits Lea Hall colliery, at Rugeley in my constituency, tomorrow, will he pay tribute to the 80 per cent. of the work force there who continued to work during the strike, despite, and in the face of, the most vicious victimisation? Is not the only way to keep jobs and improve job prospects in Rugeley to ensure that affairs are run on truly democratic lines?

Mr. Hunt: I very much look forward, not only to going underground at Lea Hall tomorrow, but to meeting the leaders of the work force, to show them that there is one political party and one Government who have not forgotten the tremendous debt owed by this country to those working miners who kept the industry in being during that unnecessary and tragic strike.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Minister not aware that there are still outstanding cases of miners who were unfairly dismissed during the strike, who took their cases to industrial tribunals and won them, yet who have not been reinstated because of the intransigence of British Coal? Will the hon. Gentleman tell the chairman of British Coal that it is about time those men were reinstated, in the interests of natural justice and good industrial relations, and that it should not continue to victimise them?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman should recognise that although more than 1,000 miners were dismissed as a direct result of the 1984-85 strike, more than half of them —527—have since been taken back by British Coal. The chairman recently announced his intention to hold a final internal review of outstanding cases of alleged unfair dismissal. It is a matter for British Coal to determine.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Is my hon. Friend aware that the private sector of the coal industry is anxious to expand coal production and also the number of jobs available in the industry? Does he agree that it is madness to maintain the restrictions on private sector output at their current low levels, and that they should be increased?

Mr. Hunt: I agree that the private sector makes a very significant contribution to our coal industry, not only through its 154 deep mines, but through the private licensed sector. It is good that that output has continued to rise over recent years, and projections are that it will continue to do so.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister referred to the need for the coal industry to be competitive so as to maintain employment levels. Will he bear in mind that whereas 150 million tonnes of coal were produced in 1974, the figure has now dropped to 90 million tonnes? Will he further bear in mind the unused development capital in the industry and consider writing off some of that so that interest charges will not be a charge on the industry, which would allow it to expand and create more jobs?

Mr. Hunt: Under this Government taxpayers' money has been used to the best possible advantage by maintaining a record level of investment, mainly in existing collieries rather than in new ones. Since 1979 investment has totalled almost £5 billion, which is far in excess of anything ever projected under any Labour Government.

Mr. Marlow: What would be the effect on employment in the coal industry if Mr. Arthur Scargill were to chuck in his appointment as life president of the National Union of Mineworkers and seek, together with Bernie Grant and at least two members of Militant Tendency and sundry others, to join this House in the Labour persuasion at the next general election?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend has rightly pointed out the true face of the Labour party. It will be interesting to see the reaction of the Labour leadership to the increasing number of Militant candidates.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister has said many times this afternoon that there have been no compulsory redundancies in the coal industry. Is that not somewhat misleading, when many men who had worked for as much as 25 years in certain skills in the coal industry were offered only unskilled work when they transferred to other pits? Therefore, there was no real choice for them.

Mr. Hunt: I shall merely repeat that it is a commitment of British Coal that men who are made redundant will have had an opportunity of continuing to work in the industry. Instead of constantly making party political points, I would prefer the hon. Lady to join me in trying to work for further markets for coal and in recognising the fact that, in South Wales, British Coal Enterprise Ltd. has now broken all previous records in providing 2,796 new jobs. The hon. Lady should concentrate her energies on helping British Coal Enterprise Ltd., instead of making such points.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister concede that, particularly in Scotland, there has been a great diminution in mining employment? Will he give the figures for the period of office of the Tory Government, from 1979 until now, showing that diminution, particularly in West Fife? Will he concede the point that has been made that, in the interests of good industrial relations, it is essential that the new director in Scotland takes an active part in removing the stigma of the victimised miners, so that we may return to stability and good understanding?

Mr. Hunt: I shall let the hon. Gentleman have the detailed figures, but the point that I was making to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) is that there is some humbug on the part of the Labour party in failing to recognise that there were significant numbers of redundancies in the coal industry before this Government came into office. Under this Government coal is regaining its rightful competitive place in the energy market.

Mr. Orme: Is the Minister aware that there is still great concern about the reinstatement of sacked miners in the

coalfields? Will the internal review to which he referred also consider cases of miners who have won their case at an industrial tribunal? If not, natural justice will not be carried out.

Mr. Hunt: The chairman of British Coal has made it clear that he will not put himself in the place of an industrial tribunal in seeking to review any decision that has already been made. He has also made it clear that he is willing to have a final internal review to look at all outstanding cases of alleged unfair dismissal. I wish that the right hon. Gentleman would join us in making it clear that no one convicted of serious violence, harassment, or intimidation, or of breaches of the mines and quarries legislation, will be taken back. That is British Coal's position. It has every right to look to the hon. Gentleman for some support from time to time.

Renewable Energy

7. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about his Department's programme of research into renewable forms of energy.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government have identified the most promising renewable technologies for United Kingdom conditions, and substantial support is being given to their development. So far this year we have announced major extensions to our programmes on wind, tidal and geothermal energy, worth over £15 million.

Mr. Amess: Has my hon. Friend had any success so far in attracting contributions from external sources for his Department's programme, because it is vital that the private sector is involved if "renewables" are to be viable? Can he give me figures for each of the past five years?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's enthusiasm. Major contributions have already been made to our programme from external sources, which have reached a record level this year. I shall arrange to place in the Library a financial table showing the past five years and the available information on these contributions.

Mr. Kennedy: Is it not likely that such a table would highlight the damaging reduction that the Government put through last year in support for research and development into alternative sources of energy? Is that not particularly self-defeating at a time when nuclear power is of such public and political concern? Might it not be in the best interests of the Government and the country if, in persuading people as to the merits of civil nuclear power industry, it were to be seen that we were not also foreclosing the option of developing research into "renewables"? Surely there is a role for both.

Mr. Hunt: The Government have maintained a record level of spending on renewables. Since 1979 over £93 million has been invested in renewable energy research and development by the Department of Energy, compared with just under £17 million in the previous five years. There are some changes from year to year due to major contracts falling in one year rather than the other, but if the hon. Gentleman examines the record he will find that no Government have done more for renewable energy and research into wind and passive solar technology, biofuels, tidal energy and geothermal hot dry rock technology. Perhaps he will acknowledge that truth.

Mr. Mudd: My hon. Friend will be aware of the contents of Professor Shock's report and the suggestion that it has identified sources of hot dry rocks that might show a 50-year cycle of life. What steps is the Department taking to attract the industrial investment that is necessary to bring this source of energy to fulfilment?

Mr. Hunt: I congratulate my hon. Friend, who has been vigilant in ensuring that I constantly meet those involved in the project and in canvassing its advantages. He is right in stressing that Professor Shock's report concludes that electricity generation at an estimated cost of 4·2 per kW hour is the most attractive option for hot dry rock technology, although the cost is subject to many uncertainties, such as drilling costs and reservoir flow. Now that we have the involvement of RTZ and Taylor Woodrow and Professor Shock's important report, we are moving towards a major decision next year. I know what my hon. Friend will be urging us to do. I hope that we shall see hot dry rock technology becoming more commercially viable.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that 50 miles from San Francisco there is a huge area covered with 1,000 gigantic windmills, and that similarly near Miami and various other cities similar windmills are to be found? The area covered is enormous and the noise is horrendous. Will my hon. Friend accept that although the Government's commitment to alternative sources of energy is highly commendable, and infinitely better than the stance taken by the Labour party, the fact remains that these alternative sources can supply only a fraction of the power that will be required in Britain in the next century?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. I, too, had the opportunity of visiting the Altamont pass a few months ago, and I can tell my hon. Friend that the number of aerogenerators has increased from 1,000 to 5,000. It is correct to say that this has aroused tremendous hostility on the part of environmental groups. It was especially satisfying to be in the Altamont pass and to recognise that the finest aerogenerators there were made by James Howden and Co. of Glasgow.

Non-nuclear Energy

8. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will undertake to increase the percentage of research and development funding allocated to non-nuclear energy sources.

Mr. Hunt: I am delighted to report that my right hon. Friend's Department's provision for non-nuclear research and development in 1986-87 is £44·91 million, compared with the estimated expenditure in 1985-86 of £40·2 million, an increase of over 10 per cent.

Mr. Speller: First, I thank my hon. Friend for the increased expenditure on renewables. Having done that, may I suggest that the percentage, which I obtained by a previous question, of 17 per cent. for everything other than nuclear energy is illogical when it is remembered that the 17 per cent. includes the clean burning of coal and all the other items that my hon. Friend has mentioned, including the cost of the energy efficiency office. Does my hon. Friend accept that were there to be anywhere in the world another Chernobyl or Three Mile Island incident, we would find our research budget to have been hopelessly small, especially should it suddenly transpire that there was to be no further nuclear programme?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is well known for his advocacy of the renewables programme, and I hope he will accept from me that the Government have provided a record level of funding for research and development into renewables. My hon. Friend is right to stress constantly the need for further expenditure on clean coal, but I remind the House that current annual public sector expenditure on coal technology research and development is about £100 million, including about £50 million on the environmentally clean use of coal. I am sure that my hon. Friend will recognise that there is there a high level of spend on renewables. We should be proud that we have all four major sources of energy — oil, gas, coal and nuclear. Our energy policies should be to keep each option active and developing.

Mr. O'Brien: In view of the Minister's reply, does he agree that research and development into the four fuels should be equal, because there is as much interest in alternatives as in nuclear fuels and because the amount of money channelled into nuclear research and development is far in excess of that provided for non-nuclear R and D? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that research and development should be equalised?

Mr. Hunt: No. I do not believe that a valid comparison can be made. The hon. Gentleman should compare research and development in the oil, gas and coal industries. That is where a valid comparison may be made. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that over the past five years the Government have reached a record level of spending on renewables and fully intend that it should continue.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does my hon. Friend agree that where large tranches of electricity are required, nuclear energy and coal energy are vital and that no form of renewables or non-nuclear fuels will suffice?

Mr. Hunt: I agree.

Mr. Eadie: Surely the most devastating question by the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) concerned the allocation of resources to nuclear energy and to renewable sources of energy. The Minister was trying to state the spend on renewable sources of energy compared to that on nuclear research, but, of course, they were not at the races—more was spent on nuclear. We should be specific when talking about research. Will the Minister give the House a guarantee that, as a result of the privatisation of British Gas, research into making synthetic North sea gas from coal at Westfield — incidentally, that has been very successful — will not suffer as a consequence of any spending cuts?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman is trying to drag a collection of red herrings across the record of the Department when he was Minister. Over five years, that Department spent less than £17 million on renewables. This Government have so far spent £93 million. The hon. Gentleman should reflect on that.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I thank my hon. Friend for answering all these questions and for his continuing support for the Severn barrage study. Will he make it clear that there is no conceivable way in which tidal energy can ever replace nuclear energy? Will he confirm that electricity demand is increasing again and that the contribution from the Severn tidal scheme would be the equivalent of only two or three years total growth?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right. He is right also to continue to reflect on the excellent speech on energy policy by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Although we are spending record amounts on renewables, and although this Government have done more for tidal energy than any previous Government, including the further inquiries and investigations into the Severn barrage and the possible Mersey barrage, it is right to reflect that the combination of all these energy sources will not have a significant impact, even on increased electricity demand, in the next 10 years.

Coal Industry

9. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy, in percentage terms, what is the improvement in output per manshift in the coal industry since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): Productivity increases by Britain's miners have now risen to new record levels for four successive weeks. For the week ending 11 October, average output per manshift was 3·48 tonnes. This is a record, representing a staggering 55 per cent. improvement over the average of 2·24 tonnes achieved in 1978-79. This continued growth in productivity demonstrates the determination of all concerned in the industry to succeed in the face of severe competition.

Mr. Couchman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these remarkable figures completely justify the enthusiasm of the National Coal Board to pay by results rather than to submit to an annual round of blackmail by the National Union of Mineworkers? Have not those areas that worked on through the strike produced some of the very best of those results?

Mr. Walker: Yes. Also, I am glad to say that, as a result of the productivity incentive plans operated by the NCB, the men who are producing those fine figures are obtaining the financial benefit for doing so.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does the Secretary of State accept, as I and many of my hon. Friends do, that improved productivity has happened for many reasons? One reason is the investment that took place under the Labour Government—because major programmes take 10 to 12 years to come to fruition — and another is the investment that has taken place under this Government. Will the Secretary of State turn his mind, and not duck the question as the Under-Secretary did in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), to the investment that took place in collieries that have closed and where there is now a burden on the colleries that remain open, with a view to writing off that capital cost?

Mr. Walker: Obviously one has to review the financial background to the balance sheet of the Coal Board as time goes on. I accept that in all industries there comes a time for appropriate write-offs, and I promise that that will be reviewed. The hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned investment under both Governments. However, the fact is that under this Government investment has been higher than ever before, and I am glad to say that we are enjoying some of the results of that investment.

Mr. Barron: If that is so, may I ask the Minister why, under the Government, we have had the go-ahead for only one new colliery to take care of the future of the coal

industry? May I also ask why some Conservative Members are positively trying to stop the development of the south Warwickshire coalfield?

Mr. Walker: Plenty of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends rejoice at the enormous investment that we have put into existing pits. We cannot have it both ways. If we want to improve the performance of existing pits to help the mining communities concerned, that must be a high priority, and it has been under this Government.

Mr. Michael Morris: Do not the figures demonstrate that morale among ordinary miners must now be at its highest for many years? Does that not reflect the fact that what the ordinary miner wants is peace in the pits and good firm management from the leadership of British Coal?

Mr. Walker: Both sides of the House will regret the fact that the rationalisation of the coal industry has resulted in closures and voluntary redundancies. However, I am glad to tell the House that one of the most significant facts is that the new enterprise company has already provided almost 11,000 new jobs in coalmining communities.

Mr. Powley: When productivity measures were being introduced Mr. Arthur Scargill said that the accident rate in the coal mines would increase significantly. Will my right hon. Friend tell us whether the accident rate has increased as a result of the improvements?

Mr. Walker: One thing is certain. The priority of anybody concerned with the coalmining industry is to see that the highest safety standards are operated. The safety regulations of the coal industry remain very strict, irrespective of any productivity agreements.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Secretary of State deny the logic of this impressive improvement, achieved as a result of the swift savagery of the contraction of the mining industry? Does he not agree that that logic should persuade him positively to support the greater use of coal in Britain? Does he not further agree that the Government should be much more insistent on achieving greater export markets in Europe and that they should make it clear that that improvement makes it obvious that the statistics about the price of coal presented to the Layfield inquiry should be withdrawn or sharply qualified?

Mr. Walker: The NCB is pursuing an active marketing policy. I have recently been to exhibitions and demonstrations for both the domestic and industrial use of coal which have been impressive. At the end of the day, the only way in which that can succeed is for the price to be competitive, and the only way in which that can be achieved is by retaining the present improvement in productivity, which compares favourably with what happened in the previous 10 years.

Mr. Eadie: I am sure the House will agree that we should pay due notice to the increase in output achieved by the miners of this country. However, how does our praise for miners increasing output square with what the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Minister said in a press release, to the effect that it is unquestionable that a fitter, slimmer coal industry is necessary? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that is a confession by a Government who want to see the industry contract? That is the language, not of a Minister responsible for coal, but of someone who has flung in the sponge because of the collapse of oil prices.

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman has heard many times in the House, there was no greater contraction of the coal industry than that which took place under Labour Governments. Therefore, it is strange to hear those views from the Opposition. The hon. Gentleman should also ask himself, with his interest in the coal industry, why between 1974 and 1978 under a Labour Government, compared with a 4 per cent. per annum improvement envisaged in the "Plan for Coal", productivity measured by output per manshift fell in each year.

British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

10. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

19. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the operation of British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government welcome the impressive progress being made by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. The company has so far committed £16·8 million in support of 791 projects and has helped to create nearly 11,000 job opportunities.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend accept that what he has told the House today will be widely welcomed by all those who are fair-mindedly willing to recognise that, in the context of the very necessary preservation of financial discipline, the Government have a humane and generous policy to help communities in real need?

Mr. Walker: The important thing about the enterprise company is not just the money that the Government have made available, but the fact that it has attracted a great deal more money with it. I hope that, with the £40 million that we have so far allocated to the enterprise company, about £200 million worth of investment will be attracted into coalmining areas. I hope that that will provide about 25,000 new jobs and much better job opportunities for those miners in areas where coal is likely to run out in the near future.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the Secretary of State aware that in communities such as Nantgarw and Cwm 1,200 job losses have just been announced? In recent years miners have moved to those pits under the no compulsory redundancy scheme and now will be made redundant again. The efforts of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. are hopelessly inadequate to meet the needs of communities facing such losses.

Mr. Walker: I recognise and very much sympathise with any community that suffers such substantial job losses. We heard many pessimistic remarks about the contribution that the enterprise company could make. If the enterprise company in its first two to three years produces 25,000 new jobs in coalmining areas and expansion, not contraction, in businesses, that is a considerable contribution.

THE ARTS

Independent Museums

30. **Mr. Key** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the pattern of development of independent museums.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): There are now as many as 1,200 independent museums, many of which have been established in the past 15 years. I have been struck by their strong sense of enterprise in marketing and management.

Mr. Key: Will my right hon. Friend join me in saluting the independent museums, the number of which has doubled in the past 15 years? Will he especially congratulate them on their energy and enthusiasm in giving a lead to the public sector? Does he agree that most of those museums charge and that the public are willing to pay for the excellence that they provide?

Mr. Luce: I join my hon. Friend in welcoming the fact that, in the past 15 years, the number of museums has doubled and that the new independent museums—many of which I have been able to visit—act as a spur to a better service for the public. As for his second question, it is true that that vast bulk of the indepedent musuems impose a charge. That appears to be something that is welcomed by the public, since they enter those museums and the charges enable museums to provide a better service.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Norman Buchan — and a happy birthday.

Mr. Buchan: I have reached the time of life when I much prefer to ignore birthdays, Mr. Speaker. On the question of paying to enter independent museums, does the Minister recognise that there is a crucial difference between them and our public institutions? Will he join me in deploring the fact that the consequence of the Victoria and Albert museum introducing voluntary charges, and the predicted charge to enter the natural history museum, is a 40 per cent. collapse in attendance? How can he say that this benefits the British people when we are nearly halving attendances? How can he claim that the public support such a policy when they are staying away in droves?

Mr. Luce: I had hoped that, on his birthday, on which I also congratulate the hon. Member, he would have asked a slightly more cheerful question. It has always been entirely up to the chairmen and trustees of museums to decide whether raising charges, either voluntarily or through a straight admission charge, is in the interests of improving the service provided by museums. If they believe that in the longer term, it will improve the service and encourage more of the public to come in, it is right that they should do so. The choice is theirs and should be left in their hands.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that, within the voluntary charges policy of the Natural History museum and of the Victoria and Albert museum, specific periods are set aside, so people will always be able to get in free of charge? Children's parties, elderly people and other special categories will always be able to go in free. Does he agree that that policy is absolutely right and must continue at all times?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend. When trustees introduce charges, they should seriously consider adequate exemptions, as happens at the National Maritime museum. The system seems to work perfectly well there. I find it strange that one can go to almost any country in the world, whether this side or the other side of the Iron Curtain, and find that charges are imposed on visitors to museums. Why do Opposition Members have such an incredible hang-up about this?

Theatre Companies

32. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he is satisfied with the operation of the Charities Act as it affects subsidised theatre companies.

Mr. Luce: I am not aware of any particular difficulties.

Mr. Freud: Will the Minister speak to his civil servants and see whether there might be a way in which a theatre can receive charitable status and be able to practise forward financial planning, which is currently impossible under the Charities Act 1985?

Mr. Luce: I will examine that. No particular problem of this kind has been brought to my attention before, but I promise to look at it and let the hon. Gentleman know what I think.

Mr. Nelson: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Chichester Festival Theatre, a registered charity, which without any support in the form of subsidies from the Arts Council or local authorities has, year after year, made a substantial cash return, and which continues to provide good theatre with 95 to 100 per cent. occupancy? Are there not lessons for other theatres with charitable status in the Chichester experience?

Mr. Luce: I am very glad indeed to join my hon. Friend in welcoming the remarkable achievement of Chichester theatre. It is a very good example of self-help in the theatre world. It is a great achievement that, without any support from the taxpayer, it is able to raise adequate resources. I hope that, like other theatres, it will find that the changes in the Budget, which encourage more giving by corporations and, from next April, by individuals, will help theatres and other arts organisations.

Regional Arts Associations'

33. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will ensure that the arm's length principle of funding the regional arts associations through the Arts Council of Great Britain is maintained.

Mr. Luce: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Sumberg: Does my right hon. Friend agree that arms's length funding is vital? Is it not somewhat ironic that the so-called alliance is as divided on this issue as on defence, because whereas the Social Democratic party wants to keep the Arts Council, the Liberal party wants to abolish it?

Mr. Luce: I agree that it is becoming a rather characteristic feature of the alliance that it seems increasingly divided on every aspect of its policies. As for arm's length policy, it is true that the Liberal and the Labour parties now appear to want to emasculate the Arts Council, which has operated extremely well since the second world war, whereas the SDP appears to be in favour of the present policy.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that his complacency about the funding of regional arts is a matter of great concern to those who do not live in London and

the south-east, as arts spending is still heavily biased towards that region? It is convenient for Conservative Members, southerners as they are, to believe that that bias is in the national interest, but those from the north or other parts of the nation know that it is obvious that arts spending does not favour people outside London and the south-east.

Mr. Luce: There is no doubt that most of the regional arts associations do a very important and good job, as I have seen when I have travelled around the country. The resources that have been allocated by the Arts Council to the regional arts associations have increased substantially, from just under £12 million in 1983-84 to £25 million in 1986-87. That shows our commitment to the regional arts associations.

Mr. Jessel: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the Arts Council will continue to fund direct, and not through the regional arts association, the Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Purcell Room on the South Bank, which, under the direct aegis of the Arts Council, are doing a first-class job and attracting larger audiences than they did under the late unlamented Greater London council?

Mr. Luce: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend about the job that some of these national institutions, including those on the South Bank, are doing, I know of no indication from the Arts Council that it wishes to change its policy on the methods of financing these big institutions. As I said earlier, for some of the smaller arts organisations throughout the country there has been a shift of policy and more money has gone to the regional arts associations.

Mr. Soley: What does the Minister intend to do about London now that the GLC has gone? I have in my constituency the West Six Theatre Company, which is to be given a final small grant by the London Residuary Body and then it will go bankrupt. That is exactly what will happen to many arts organsiations in London. What does the Minister intend to do about it?

Mr. Luce: It was for that reason that a year ago this Government found an additional £25 million to help with the transitional problems that were connected with catering for the abolition areas. All the evidence suggests that, thanks to the good efforts of the local authorities, the Arts Council and the regional arts associations, most of the arts bodies that merit public support have been given it.

Arts Council

34. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain; and what was discussed.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman on 6 October, when we discussed matters of mutual concern.

Mr. Banks: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he join me in congratulating Glasgow on having been selected as the city of culture in Europe? Is it not an example that should be emulated by other cities throughout the United Kingdom? Does he recognise that culture plays a very major part in creating an image for a city and providing enjoyment for its inhabitants?

Mr. Luce: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. Last week I was very glad to be able to go to Glasgow to announce that the city is to be nominated as the city which, subject to the agreement of my colleagues, the European Culture Ministers, will be the city of culture for Europe in 1990. Glasgow has made great efforts in demonstrating the range of arts facilities that it has to offer. We have every reason to be confident that it will be an excellent city to be so designated in 1990.

Mr. Buchan: As someone who was totally neutral as regards the eight or nine cities that were bidding for the title, I am perfectly happy about the decision of the Minister for the Arts. Those who know Glasgow know that it will truly represent the best characteristics of the arts that are developed in Scotland and in Britain as a whole. However, when the Minister has finished congratulating himself and his Back Benchers, will he tell me whether the chairman of the Arts Council has ever said that he also approves of the tapering off of the £25 million about which the Minister has just been boasting? Next year the £25 million will be reduced to £20 million, and the reduction in the rate of inflation has also to be taken into account. Very few of the bodies that were defended by my hon. Friend will survive such a policy.

Mr. Luce: On the hon. Gentleman's first question, it is very good to have had his unanimous support. It is the first time since I have been the Minister for the Arts that I have seen him quite so cheerful. As for the taper, it has always been made clear that after finding £25 million in the first year of abolition to cater for the initial transitional cost the Government would be looking to the local authorities to play an increasing part in the years ahead. For that reason we look to them now to play an even more prominent role than they played last year, and I have every confidence that they will do so.

CIVIL SERVICE

Public Appointment Unit

39. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will encourage women to offer themselves as candidates to the public appointment unit.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): Yes, Sir. The Government are keen to extend the role of women in advisory and policy-making bodies.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm recent newspaper reports that the Prime Minister is taking a particular interest in this matter? Is he aware of the organisation called Women in Public Life, and does he support its objectives? Does my right hon. Friend see the public appointments unit carrying out its responsibility in that area by giving extra publicity to the desire to see more women enter the Civil Service and other aspects of public life?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I congratulate him on the lead that he is taking on this important issue. It is true that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is taking a close interest and would like more women to be appointed to these positions of importance. I have noted the organisation, Women in Public Life, the work that it is doing and the conference that it recently held. The public appointments unit now

has on its register 5,000 men but only 1,000 women and special efforts are being made to obtain more names for that list. I hope that if hon. Members have any names they will let me know.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Will the Minister give an assurance that the Prime Minister, as evidence of her sincerity in this matter, will seek to appoint a women as the new vice-chairman of the Tory party?

Mr. Luce: There are only certain things that I am answerable for, and on this occasion I shall stick to my brief.

Mr. Stokes: In view of tomorrow's business, am I right in assuming that the public appointments unit does not cover any ecclesiastical appointments?

Mr. Luce: As far as I am aware it does not cover any ecclesiastical appointments, but I shall confirm that to my hon. Friend.

Civil Service Unions (Meetings)

40. **Mr. Key** asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met the Civil Service unions; and what was discussed.

41. **Mr. Parry** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what subjects were discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Civil Service unions.

42. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met the Civil Service unions; and what was discussed.

Mr. Luce: I have informal meetings from time to time with the Civil Service unions. Topics of mutual interest are discussed.

Mr. Key: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the genuine concern over pay, particularly in the scientific grades of the Civil Service, which is affecting morale and efficiency? Will he pay further visits to establishments in my constituency to see for himself?

Mr. Luce: I know of my hon. Friend's keen interest in civil servants, particularly scientists, since he has a considerable number in his constituency. Having just visited, with great pleasure, the arts in his constituency, I shall try to visit his civil servants at some time in the future. I should like to reassure him that we are taking corrective action to try to stem the decline in the number of scientists, and that includes improved starting salaries for new recruits and pay additions which put salaries above the level of the overall increase that the Civil Service achieved this year. Those and various other measures are designed to try to encourage scientists to stay in the Civil Service.

Mr. Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the executive and president of the Civil and Public Services Association on arranging for a re-run of its election, which is something that I have called for on many occasions? Will he ensure that when he next meets the unions the ballot will be a secret one, controlled by the central balloting system, with people sending their ballot forms direct to the central system rather than a local ballot, because the people in Leicester were most concerned at the unsatisfactory result, electing John Macreadie, a well-known undemocratic gentleman?

Mr. Luce: To the first question my answer is yes, Sir. The procedures for running elections are a matter for the unions.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does the Minister discuss with Civil Service unions the staffing of Department of Health and Social Security offices and the possible shortage of staff, because it would appear from the complaints in my postbag that, despite the excellence of the staff at John William House, there is a backlog and waiting list and a need to increase the staff to look after those of my constituents who are unemployed and in receipt of DHSS benefits?

Mr. Luce: I realise that there is a problem in some parts of the country, and it is for that reason that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services announced some months ago that the number of people in the social services departments would be increased by 5,000, which would enable more hard-pressed departments to be covered more effectively.

Mr. Sackville: Did my right hon. Friend have a chance to discuss with Civil Service unions the further relocation of civil servants' jobs? In these days of information technology, why do senior civil servants need to be located in expensive real estate in Whitehall? Will my right hon. Friend consider relocating the Treasury to, for example, Bolton?

Mr. Luce: It may be best to keep my views to myself. It is for political heads of Departments to determine whether their operational requirements mean that they can ask civil servants to move to other parts of the country. The dispersal policy has not yet quite been completed, and involves dispersing 5,900 civil servants to other parts of the country.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister agree with the civil service unions that an increase in the number of VAT officers would lead to a net increase in the amount of VAT received by the Treasury?

Mr. Luce: I think that I shall leave my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to answer that question.

Dr. McDonald: Will the Minister arrange to meet the Civil Service unions about the ban on civil servants giving information to Members of Parliament in Select Committees? Is he aware that the ban can work only if Ministers are truthful to Select Committees and if Government Ministers do not name civil servants publicly? Is the Minister further aware that civil servants are well able to give a good account of themselves, if required to do so, particularly in the context of a proper code of ethics?

Mr. Luce: As far as I am aware that matter can be debated fully on Wednesday, in the context of the Government's reply to the Select Committee on the Westland issue. It is agreed that the job of Select Committees is to inquire into a Department's expenditure, administration and policy, but on the strict question of an individual civil servant's conduct, the civil servant is accountable to his permanent secretary and ultimately to the Minister, and it is the latter who is accountable to the House.

Artificial Limbs (Supply)

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the effects on the supply and fitting of artificial limbs of the "lock-out" at J E Hanger and Company Ltd.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): The House will know that 300 workers usually engaged in the manufacture and repair of artificial limbs at J E Hanger works at Roehampton have been in dispute with their management since 15 September. The limbs manufactured at Roehampton are for fitting at Department of Health and Social Security artificial limb and appliance centres. The dispute is at present confined to bench hands at the Hanger Roehampton factory, and has not spread elsewhere.

The Government's concern throughout the dispute has been to safeguard the welfare of patients. We have sought to make arrangements to ensure that no amputee is left immobile. As a result, the effect of this dispute on patients thus far has been small — although I am acutely conscious of the difficulties caused to a small number of individuals.

There are some 3,000 prosthetic appointments each week at artificial limb and appliance centres: by the end of last week some 58 patient had had their appointments postponed because their limbs could not be supplied in time. In these cases we are arranging with the company for the limbs to be supplied urgently and are making fresh appointments for the patients as soon as possible. In order to avoid any wider disruption to the service, arrangements are being made, where necessary, for the work to be carried out elsewhere. We are taking particular care in the case of primary patients, who have recently undergone their amputations.

In view of the great importance of patient care, I have asked for a report each day on the emerging situation during this dispute. However, I must stress that the great bulk of the artificial limb and appliance service is not affected by the dispute, and I am particularly keen that patients who need attention should not hesitate to contact their local centre in the usual way.

I must emphasise that the Government are not a party to this dispute. It is a dispute between management and a part of its work force; it is a matter for negotiation between them. Both sides are aware that the services of ACAS remain available, and I believe that both sides should be prepared to involve ACAS forthwith.

Mr. Dobson: In view of the quite unsatisfactory statement by the Minister, I should like to ask again why the Government have not taken more vigorous action to protect the interests of National Health Service patients who rely on the work carried out by J E Hanger. Why have I not yet received a reply to my letter of 8 October to the Secretary of State? The Minister said that he had asked for daily reports. When did he start to do that? Will he stop saying that this matter does not affect patients? The centre used to produce 100 new or adjusted limbs per day, and the dispute has been going on since 16 September. The DHSS press office and the Minister have acknowledged that more than 50 people have been affected, but Baroness Trumpington said as recently as 17 October in the other place:

"We do not envisage any amputee being left immobile as a result of the J. E. Hanger dispute."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 17 October 1986, Vol. 480, c 1024.]

Perhaps the Prime Minister, to whom a copy of my letter was sent, could have drawn the attention of the Baroness and of the Minister to the plight of one of my constituents, Mr. Rob Dickson, who has only one leg. He is suffering from bleeding and soreness and extreme discomfort in the stump of his missing leg. He flaked out and had to be taken to the Royal Free hospital to be resuscitated. Mr. Dickson is still in hospital.

Does the Minister not accept that one of the reasons for this industrial dispute is that the new owners, unlike the previous ones, are interested only in profits? I should tell the Minister that the work force has been sacked. The new owners are responding to the Government's encouragement of macho Murdoch style management by sacking staff to gain financial and industrial advantages.

Will the Minister tell us whether the offer that this dedicated work force of 300 skilled staff received last week from the management was reasonable? Does he support it? Is it right that the management offered to take back only 80 workers and to give miserly compensation of about £2,000 to the rest, some of whom had worked for the company for 40 years? Does the Minister accept that that offer was rejected by the work force by 238 votes to two? Does he accept that the DHSS and Employment Ministers are not doing what they ought to do in a proper effort to resolve this dispute? Their activities are characterised by the attitude of Pontius Pilate. They should do their job properly and protect the interests of people who are suffering because they are not able to get the limbs to which they are entitled.

Mr. Major: If there is a top, it is clear that the hon. Gentleman has gone well over it yet again.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the dispute and about the offer to the work force. These are matters for the management and staff, and it would not be helpful, nor would it be in the interests of finding a solution, if I were to express views on them, and however pressed I have no intention of doing so. The hon. Gentleman also spoke about vigorous action. In my statement I set out clearly the parameters of the action.

The hon. Gentleman might have said that of the 14,300 attendances each month over the period of this dispute, thus far I am aware of only 58 postponed appointments. I am acutely aware of the difficulties caused to those 58 people, and in that context I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) in whose constituency Roehampton is located. He has made repeated representations to me about this dispute and has voiced his anxiety about patient care.

We have identified, and are identifying, patients whose appointments have been delayed. We are arranging fresh appointments for them and, as I said in my statement, we are seeking to arrange for the alternative manufacture of limbs where that is necessary. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) must permit me to answer the questions that he asked, and be prepared to listen to the answers. Daily reports have been made available to the Department since the middle of last week, and will continue to be made available for some considerable time, so that we may monitor the effect of this dispute.

I was sorry to hear of the particular difficulties faced by the hon. Gentleman's constituent, Mr. Dickson, and if

[Mr. Major]

the hon. Gentleman will be kind enough to give me details I shall endeavour to have the matter examined without any further delay.

It is our wish to see this dispute ended but, in our judgment, it is not likely to be ended by injudicious interference by Ministers. Nevertheless, the services of ACAS are available to both participants.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): The House will appreciate the position of my hon. Friend the Minister and will be grateful for the report that he has given us. He said that in certain cases other suppliers were being used. Will he assure us that he will use other suppliers in any circumstances where this will help to solve the problems that the dispute has precipitated?

Mr. Major: My prime concern is patient care. I can assure my hon. Friend that wherever that is possible it will be done.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Minister says that he is not responsible and so will not interfere in the dispute caused by the decision of Hanger to pay off these men. He, together with other Ministers, is responsible for the supply of legs, so he has responsibility for awarding contracts. The Minister will know that there are difficulties with contracts, not only in this area, but in Britain generally. He cannot say that he is not responsible. He should take a far greater interest in ensuring that the dispute is resolved.

Mr. Major: I draw a clear distinction between not being responsible for settling the dispute, which is between management and the work force, and the responsibility, which I acknowledge, of seeking to ensure an adequate supply of limbs to those in need. In my statement and answers to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) I set out clearly the action that we are taking to ensure the supply of limbs. We shall continue to take that action, for we share the hon. Gentlemens' concern about it.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that any industrial action of this nature is regrettable, particularly considering the harm and possible danger to those who are in receipt of artificial limbs? Does he agree that both parties should make greater efforts to resolve their differences, for the sake of those whom they serve?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend makes his points with great clarity. My unwillingness to become involved in the dispute is matched by my unwillingness to cast blame in either direction. I share my hon. Friend's concern that the people of primary importance are those who are waiting for artificial limbs.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Does the Minister accept that many hon. Members believe that the Government are responsible for the incidents at Roehampton, where management has sacked summarily a work force of 300? Is it not a fact that during the past seven years this Administration have exchanged consultation and conciliation in industrial relations for confrontation and submission? The Government are responsible for what is happening.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are supremely irrelevant, even by his high standards of irrelevance. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman would blame the Government if it rained. It is not the Government's fault that the dispute has occurred and I refuse to accept the blame for it.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I thank my hon. Friend for his statement, but is it not the case that the Government are greatly involved, in that National Health Service patients, and the NHS itself, are important customers of this company? Does my hon. Friend remember the remarks made by my hon. and noble Friend in another place 10 days ago, when she said that the Government had, indeed, inquired of Hanger management

"orally and in writing what action is being taken to maintain supply."

My noble Friend told another place on that occasion:

"The company has refused to reply . . . to either approach."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 17 October 1986; Vol. 480, c. 1023.]

Will my hon. Friend redouble his efforts to bring about a sensible solution to the problem?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend has correctly stated the remarks of our noble Friend in another place. I take to heart the injunction that he has laid on us and I will seek to do that.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): On the question of delays in helping limbless people, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) spoke, is the Minister aware that there is now urgent need for a definitive statement on the Government's response to the recommendations of the McColl report on artificial limb and appliance services?

This dispute, which some regard as not wholly unrelated to delays in dealing with the McColl recommendations, makes the need for a definitive statement all the more urgent. My hon. Friend raised a very distressing case. Is the Minister aware that I have a letter from a woman—a limbless young mother who has visited an artificial limb and appliance centre 23 times this year alone—which has been given to me by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and which I am authorised to pass to the Minister? Will he give it immediate attention and say now when and how the Government will act?

Mr. Major: The right hon. Gentleman touches on an exceedingly important point when he refers to the McColl report. I am urgently studying its recommendations, together with the comments made on it, not least by the Royal College of Physicians in its report on physical disability. I shall endeavour to produce conclusions and proposals for action as soon as possible and shall naturally keep the House informed as soon as conclusions are reached.

On the right hon. Gentleman's second point, I shall certainly examine the case without delay.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order later.

Channel Tunnel

3.45 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the intervention by Ministers in the financing of the Channel tunnel project."

Since the House rose on Friday afternoon it has become widely known that the Eurotunnel consortium is in a state of shambles, having failed yet again to meet its twice-postponed deadline for raising the first £206 million of equity for the £5 billion Channel tunnel project. Although the Government have always insisted that the financing of the Channel tunnel is a private sector matter which must be decided solely by market forces operating at arm's length from the Government, weekend press reports in several newspapers have revealed what appears to be an extraordinary change in that policy. In particular, it is reported that Ministers and their officials have intervened with the Bank of England and with various financial institutions, including the pension funds of British Rail and the British Steel Corporation, putting pressure on the managers of those funds to make a last-minute subscription to the Eurotunnel share placing.

If those press reports are true, I must suggest that such ministerial intervention is unconstitutional and improper. Fund managers have a fiduciary duty to safeguard the interests of their pensioners; they have no duty to save Ministers from political embarrassment or Eurotunnel from financial collapse.

The House also needs to be told whether the allegations that Ministers have intervened to bring about boardroom changes at Eurotunnel are true and whether it is true, as reported, that the Government are preparing a contingency plan to subscribe taxpayers' money to shore up the Eurotunnel placing.

Whatever may be the meaning of all these boardroom and ministerial shenanigans, the fact of the matter is that the Channel tunnel project is fast becoming a discredited and busted flush. Eurotunnel's financial terms have rightly been boycotted by most British investment institutions, and some of the French backers are getting cold feet, too.

The House and the country are owed an early debate or at least an early Government statement. Best of all, the project deserves an early funeral.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the intervention by Ministers in the financing of the Channel tunnel project."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said. As he well knows, my only duty when considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should take precedence over the business already set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter that he has raised meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

BBC (Court Case)

3.48 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope for the same treatment for my point of order as was afforded to the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) when he raised a point of order from the Government Dispatch Box on Thursday.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that on Thursday, following my Standing Order No. 10 application on

"the need for an inquiry into evidence of interference with witnesses in the case of Hamilton and Howarth *v.* the BBC"

—[*Official Report* 23 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. 1307.]

the right hon. Member for Chingford intervened at the Dispatch Box to inform the House that he would not use parliamentary privilege to reply, but would answer outside the House without the protection of privilege, thus, by implication, inviting me to act similarly.

You will recognise, Mr. Speaker, that I have not been able to take that course because there is a danger of a gagging writ being served upon me, with the effect that Parliament would be silenced and be unable to debate the question of illegal interference with witnesses, under our own sub judice rules.

The decision by the chairman of the Conservative party not to make a statement was a deliberate ploy to avoid placing himself in contempt of the House by misleading the House in a personal statement. The precedents for that are set out in "Erskine May", chapter 10.

In so far as you allowed, by implication, the right hon. Member for Chingford, on a point of order, to challenge me to repeat my assertions outside the House, may I be similarly treated? May I be allowed the right to ask the right hon. Member for Chingford to repeat his statement, made outside the House last week, inside the House this week, from the Dispatch Box? Will the right hon. Gentleman repeat in particular that part of his statement where he emphatically and vigorously denied to the press and the media generally that David Mitchell, head of the Conservative Central Office legal department, had spoken to potential witnesses after 6 February, when the legal action was initiated, and when the Members of Parliament concerned had issued the writs?

My evidence is that Mr. Mitchell spoke to potential witnesses, knowing them to be potential witnesses, on 22 February and thereafter. I challenge the chairman of the Conservative party to repeat his assertions at the Dispatch Box in a statement that is subject to the normal rules of the House. If he refuses, the country will know that a conspiracy of silence is being engineered by senior figures to hide the truth from Parliament.

We also need to know which people——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now going far beyond the point of order. I have allowed him indulgence so far. Shall I deal with the matter now?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Just one thing more, Mr. Speaker. We also need to know which people listed in the internal memo submitted to the BBC's board of management——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may wish to know that, but it is not a matter for me. I think that I can now deal with the matter. Whether the chairman of the Tory party comes to the Dispatch Box to answer these allegations is not a matter for me. I cannot rule on that.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) had hoped to point out that as many as 17 out of 20 witnesses may have been persuaded to withdraw—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman will have his turn. He can raise his own point of order. We are put in a particularly difficult position in that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster answers questions for only five minutes every six parliamentary weeks. He last answered questions on 30 June, almost four months ago, and is next due to answer questions two weeks into the new Session a month away.

I have checked with the Table Office, and I am assured that even if hon Members try to table questions on the right hon. Gentleman's functions as chairman of the Conservative party, the Table Office, for proper reasons, would have to reject them. Yet on Thursday the same Chancellor of the Duchy, knowing in advance the nature of the Standing Order No. 10 application, came to the House prepared. He knew that a point would be made about his role as chairman of the Conservative party. He could have gone on to the Back Benches in his private role and raised a point of order, like any other hon. Member. Instead, he calculatedly chose to go to the Dispatch Box in his role as a Cabinet Minister to raise a point of order relating to his responsibilities as chairman of the Conservative party. He made a virtue of the fact that any statement would be made outside the House.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): It is a virtue.

Mr. Williams: If it is a virtue, that implies that he had the option of making a statement within the House. He rejected that option. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has helped me considerably.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is true that the Chancellor of the Duchy had that option, but that is not a matter for me.

Mr. Williams: I am coming to the key point. As the Prime Minister, in the Government's reply on Westland, said that Ministers were answerable to this House for those who serve them; as the right hon. Gentleman, as a Cabinet Minister, is head of the Conservative Central Office and those who work there serve him; as the right hon. Gentleman, as Chancellor of the Duchy, is not due to answer parliamentary questions for another month; and as, even then, we will not be able to table questions to him in either oral or written form, can you tell us, Mr. Speaker, whether the right hon. Gentleman abused his position on Thursday by coming to the Dispatch Box and answering as chairman of the Conservative party, and whether he is abusing his position now by again refusing to come to the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a shadow Minister and he knows that there are many opportunities and ways to raise these matters. They are not matters for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No. I have been very patient with the hon. Gentleman in allowing him to raise a matter that was not a point of order for me. I cannot add to my answer.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order I am not taking the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a separate point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking it.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Rates (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[*Mr. Malone.*]

Point of Order

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. As I have said, I have given the hon. Gentleman considerable indulgence this afternoon in allowing him to raise a matter which, quite frankly, he knows is not a point of order for me. I cannot help him further on this matter. He is seeking to make a political point through me, and I think that the whole House would deprecate that.

Opposition Day

[18TH ALLOTTED DAY] [2ND PART]

Government Regional Policy

3.57 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I beg to move,

That this House condemns Her Majesty's Government for its total lack of concern for Scotland and Wales as demonstrated by its failure to provide effective regional economic policies; notes the devastating implications of the European Regional Development Fund report on the United Kingdom Regional Development Programme 1986-90; and calls for a fundamental re-think of Government policy towards economic regeneration to provide real and permanent jobs within reach of all the peoples of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Stewart: There can be no doubt that United Kingdom regional economic policy has, to a large extent, failed in its purpose — which was to equalise employment chances among the regions and nations of the United Kingdom, to spread industrial development and to help decentralise the economy.

Even when the policy was at its strongest and most effective in the 1970s, it had only partially succeeded in its task. During the period 1945 to 1970 Scotland benefited the least of all the economic planning regions in terms of net employment gain attributable to the effects of regional policy. I shall refer later to the efficacy of that policy and what I consider should have been done.

For the benefit of those in the least depressed parts of the United Kingdom who have never needed the help of a regional policy, nor are ever likely to, I shall give a fairly brief history of its development. It was born back in the 1930s, but before the second world war there were only a few special areas — west-central Scotland, south-east Wales and small parts of the north of England. In the post-war period the special areas were renamed development areas. The then Board of Trade was empowered with the task of building factories in the areas providing public services, reclaiming derelict land and disbursing loans and grants.

The year 1948 saw the birth of industrial development certificates, which enabled the Government to control the location of new investment and factories. The new development areas were extended in the same year to include other parts of Scotland, Wales, the north of England and Northern Ireland. In 1960 the old development areas were abolished and new development districts created, giving a wider coverage of Scotland and Wales and, for the first time, parts of Devon and Cornwall.

From this point on, industrial development certificates were strictly controlled, with strong preference being shown for companies locating in the disadvantaged assisted areas. In 1967 regional employment premium and regional development grants were introduced. The former was a straight payroll subsidy for manufacturing firms in the assisted areas. In the previous year new development areas were created, covering virtually the whole of Scotland and Wales and large parts of the north of England.

Between 1970 and 1975 the geographical coverage of regional assistance remained virtually unchanged. This was probably the peak period of regional policy. Special development areas within development areas were extended. Intermediate areas were established, and regional development grants, automatic capital grants for firms locating in the assisted areas, were born. They were paid at the rate of 22 per cent. in special development areas, 20 per cent. in development areas and, in intermediate areas, 20 per cent. for buildings. Regional selective assistance continued and was available to companies in any area, at the Government's discretion. With all those powers in force, regional economic policy was at its strongest.

The dismantling of the system began in 1976, when the Labour party suddenly and summarily abolished the regional employment premium. This caused great consternation in industry in Wales, Scotland and other assisted areas. At a stroke, regional aid in Scotland was slashed by £78 million. Also in the mid-1970s, the Scottish Development Agency and the Welsh Development Agency were established. By wielding political power in 1974, in voting for the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru, the electors in Scotland and Wales enabled our two parties to put on the pressure, to the advantage of the two nations. I shall say more about the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. My colleagues in Plaid Cymru will no doubt wish to talk about the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Mid-Wales.

The later 1970s saw the beginning of greater Government concern about the state of inner cities, particularly London and Birmingham. In years to come they were to claim the attention of the Government, to the disadvantage of regional policy. Many detrimental changes took place between 1979 and the present. These began with the announcement by the then Secretary of State for Industry, the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), of a three-year programme of descheduling of assisted areas. The requirement of industrial development certificates was abolished in 1982, after having been steadily weakened since 1975. By August 1982 most of the north-east of Scotland had been removed from development area status, as were Lothian and the Borders. Most of mid-Wales was also descheduled.

In November 1984 the most recent round of substantial changes took place. The special development areas were completely abolished. Only development areas retain the automatic right to regional development grants at a lower rate of 15 per cent. of capital expenditure. Intermediate areas qualified only for selective grants.

A particular worrying aspect is that regional development grants are no longer available in development areas for replacement investment. Many of the incoming firms established in Scotland in the 1960s and early 1970s require substantial new investment. With the withdrawal of RDGs, many firms may choose to move to a new location, probably outside Scotland, and in a development area so that they can pick up a better deal.

In the 1984 review of policy large parts of Scotland were completely descheduled. Apart from the obvious loss of United Kingdom Government grants, an additional worrying factor is that these areas are no longer eligible for many European Community development grants. That is

[Mr. Stewart]

a double blow in many parts of the Highlands, Grampian, Lothian, Tayside, Central and the Borders. Scotland bore 30 per cent. of the cut in regional aid spending.

Although regional policy over the years has been inadequate in many respects, it provided a valuable and not inconsiderable boost to many parts of the country. Economists working for the Department of Trade and Industry reckoned that between 1960 and 1981 regional policy was responsible for creating some 600,000 jobs in assisted areas. Some 400,000 positions were still in existence by 1981, although the recession will have reduced that total. Even so, the figures that I have quoted do not take into account any secondary or multiplier effect in creating jobs in service industries in the assisted areas.

This situation is in no way a substitute for Scotland and Wales having the power to use their own resources and skills within an autonomous economic framework and to embark on policies for their own benefit and not for the benefit of the rich south of England. However, it has helped to stem a tide of emigration, unemployment and poverty, which would have been worse without regional economic assistance.

That regional policy in under attack is plain for all to see. The latest changes, in 1984, carried on a series of cuts and expenditure that began some time ago, in 1976. In constant price terms 1975-76 was the peak year for spending on regional preferential assistance of all kinds. First came the Labour cuts in 1976, 1977 and 1978. Spending then recovered for three or four years, but resumed a downward trend in more recent years. In cash terms, spending in 1982-83 was £956 million in Britain. This was cut to £640 million in 1983-84 and £615 million in 1984-85. Spending in Scotland shows the same downward trend from £369 million in 1982-83 to £227 million in 1983-84 and £184 million in 1984-85. There was a slight rise in the year 1985-86, to £199 million. However, in real terms, the level of regional aid now paid to both Scotland and Wales is far below the value of what was paid in previous years. In the case of Scotland, the real value of aid is only about 50 per cent. of the 1975-86 payment. It is also the case that Scotland's share of regional development grant fell from 44·1 per cent. in 1982-83 to 32 per cent. in 1984-85.

On almost any aspect, Scotland and Wales, which enjoyed a reasonably supportive regional aid system 10 years ago, have been relegated into the second division as unemployment and inner city problems have hit the midlands and south-east of England. Money has been diverted to these areas. The work of the Location of Offices Bureau in persuading firms to move their headquarters out of London has been suspended. Over the past few years the south-east region has been able to consolidate its dominance in corporate control and research and development activities.

Scotland has also lost on financial assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act. This category of payment is made to certain sectors of industry, and the high-tech and micro-electronic industries have been among the main beneficiaries. The cumulative payments under section 8, up to March 1985, have been: Wales £25 million, Scotland £48 million, England £474 million. The Thames valley and the south-east region have won again, and section 8 is the fastest growing block of regional assistance.

The Scottish Development Agency and the Welsh Development Agency are well known, but how many know that there is a development agency in England as well? The English Industrial Estates Corporation, in its own words, is

"the largest developer and manager of industrial and commercial property in England. Our service doesn't end when the building does. We do everything that we can to help businesses in our care to flourish and grow."

If hon. Members who represent English constituencies contribute to the debate, I hope that they will not adopt the old, worn-out theme that runs, "The Scots and the Welsh have development agencies, why cannot England have one as well?". If any English Members have listened to the pronouncement of the Scottish sector of the Scottish economy, they might be forgiven for thinking that everything is coming up roses, or thistles in Scotland and daffodils in Wales. Unfortunately, that is not the position. It would be nearer the truth to say that any slight improvement in the relative performance of the Scottish economy is due to the deterioration in England's economy.

The Scottish economy is far from healthy. The same can be said of the economy in Wales, and I know that my hon. Friends from Plaid Cymru will want to deal with that. For the first two quarters of 1986 there were large increases in redundancies in Scotland, while the Great Britain figure remained stable. Output, when set against the 1980 base of 100, is only 104, the same level as that which prevailed in 1976. Net emigration has averaged 15,000 a year from Scotland since the start of the decade. The latest figures tell us that hard-core unemployment is still on the increase. Scotland and Northern Ireland are the only two regions to share that deplorable trend. Weekly earnings have fallen behind the Great Britain average after a few years of parity. Even oil-related employment is on the decline.

In December 1982 the Cambridge Economic Policy Review Group forecast regional unemployment figures by 1990, assuming the current economic policy was maintained. It estimated that in Wales 22 per cent. would be unemployed, with over 20 per cent. in Scotland. Given present trends, it does not appear that it will be far wrong. I cannot begin to comprehend the Government's thinking behind the destruction of regional policy. I can only guess that the Government know where their support lies, which is in the midlands and the south-east of England, and that that is where they intend to concentrate their attention. Judged by any rational, economic or social standard, there is a crying need for more, not less, regional policy.

Recently, the Fraser of Allander Institute, a body which is engaged in economic research and forecasting in Scotland, stated:

"The catalogue of spatial, economic and industrial problems in Scotland is extensive. Shipbuilding on Tyneside, social deprivation in Glasgow, rural unemployment in the highlands and islands, skewed spatial distribution of oil-related employment are all affecting the health of the Scottish economy."

Gross regional disparities exist in the United Kingdom and these have been highlighted by recession. In a special report in 1983 the Regional Studies Association said:

"It is clear that . . . the evidence supports the identification of a basic regional dualism in the United Kingdom. This consists essentially of a 'greater south-east zone of relative economic buoyancy and most of the rest of the country characterised in general by economic debility and decline'."

More recently, a document entitled "United Kingdom Regional Development Programme 1986-90" grabbed the headlines. This is the first time that the House has debated regional affairs with a knowledge of what was stated in that document. It was prepared for and published by the European regional development fund. One of the most damning sets of statistics of the 17-volume report is contained in the introduction. Of the poorer regions identified by the European Community within the Community, over one third are in the United Kingdom. The "index of regional disadvantage" that is used by the Community includes in the top 10 disadvantaged areas Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway. Gwent, mid-South Wales and Glamorgan appear in the next 10. There are four other Welsh counties in the next 10, and the regions of the Borders, Central Fife, Lothian and Tayside are in the following 10. Of the worst 40 deprived areas, the United Kingdom has 28, 14 of which are in Wales or Scotland. These are staggering and sobering figures which demonstrate how far we have fallen behind our European neighbours in our standard of living.

In another European Community ranking that is included in the report, employment levels are used as the criteria. Eleven of the worst 20 regions are in the United Kingdom, and five of them are in Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman. I know that his figures are accurate, but does he agree that one of the areas that suffers most is Merseyside? That is why some of us constantly raise Merseyside issues in the House.

Mr. Stewart: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. Merseyside's problems are well known, and in my introduction I said that one of the disadvantaged areas is the north of England. There is no doubt about that. There is no doubt, too, that the hon. Gentleman's argument is valid.

The EC report observes the position of the disadvantaged regions and points out that, while industrial structure and peripherality will continue to contribute to the problem, recent research has identified other causes of continuing disparity. Research and development are concentrated in the south of England, and Scotland and Wales are largely dependent on the south for innovation. Scotland and Wales have a low proportion of managerial and professional jobs and a high proportion of semi-skilled or unskilled workers.

The report considers the various regions within Scotland and Wales, and almost all emerge with a similarly depressing prospect. Overall, in Scotland and Wales, unemployment will remain at about the present levels in 1990. Although there are opportunities for expansion in both countries in high technology and the service sector, the good points cannot outweigh the sheer scale of job losses in traditional manufacturing industries such as coal, steel, shipbuilding and engineering. The document from the European Community, which was not intended to be read by anyone other than Ministers, civil servants and European Commissioners, holds out little hope of improvement in the disastrous levels of unemployment in the two nations of Wales and Scotland. The only way to effect improvement is to have a complete change in economic regional policy and thinking.

Attention must be paid to the fact that too many of our factories in Scotland and Wales are branch plants of large foreign-owned multinationals. The figures for Scotland show that in recent years foreign-owned firms were responsible for 38 per cent. of net capital investment. They were responsible for 20 per cent. of manufacturing output in Scotland. In the micro-electronics sector, 40 per cent. of firms in Scotland are owned by United States organisations, while a further 40 per cent. are English owned.

The old problem of the lack of indigenous control and development has reared its head again, with the concomitant disadvantages of a lack of managerial and research and development work. Instead, there is a concentration on assembly-line jobs. Forget the bluff, optimistic noises that emanate from the Scottish Office on the subject of the "recovery in Scotland". That recovery is not taking place. Industries are under-resourced and the unemployment problem is increasing. Our infrastructure is crying out for investment and replacement. Our young people search — mostly in vain — for worthwhile opportunities. Many give up hope and leave the country of their birth. The same can be said of Wales. If anything, the ERDF report to which I have referred paints a rather bleaker outlook for the Welsh economy.

It is against that background that the Government have sought to destroy regional policy and to starve Scotland, Wales and the northern regions of England of investment and the chance of employment and a better future. The Conservatives may continue in power until after the next election, but they will do so only on the strength of support from middle and southern England. At consecutive elections, Scotland and Wales have rejected the Government and their policies. The electorate put the Conservatives in power. The tide has turned in Wales and Scotland and the Government will soon find that people no longer wish to be part of the British state, its political system and its economic tragedy.

4.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognised the efforts and achievements of Her Majesty's Government in stimulating the economies of Scotland and Wales; welcomes the submission to the European Commission of the United Kingdom Regional Development Programme for 1986-90 as the basis for maximising European Regional Development Fund assistance to the United Kingdom; notes the references in that document to the significant steps being taken by the Government to replace jobs lost in the assisted areas and to strengthen the infrastructure of such areas; and endorses the Government's determination to tackle the problems of all parts of the United Kingdom by means of sustained and effective economic and regional policies.".

I am sure that I would have the support of the whole House in saying how sorry we were to learn of the accident that befell the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) at the weekend. He was to have spoken in this debate on behalf of the Opposition. We wish him a speedy recovery.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) on getting to the House in time for today's debate, despite what seems to me to be the only discernible policy of a regional nature that the Scottish National party has adopted—to boycott British Airways. But even the right hon. Gentleman's charm and personal qualities cannot disguise the inherently unsavoury nature of the motion that his party has tabled for this afternoon's

[Mr. Ian Lang]

debate. Here we see the distasteful spectacle of the two separatist parties, from Scotland and Wales, which want to break up the United Kingdom and which repeatedly claim that they would be better off on their own, whingeing that they are not given enough out of the United Kingdom's policies. I hope that the House will understand if I concentrate my remarks primarily upon the Scottish aspects of the motion, allowing the Under-Secretary of State for Wales — my hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts) — to deal with the Welsh side.

There will, I feel sure, be many parallels between the two countries, not least in the great difficulty we have in establishing what the nationalist parties actually stand for. Certainly, there was no guidance in the speech of the right hon. Member for Western Isles. We are falling back on the other half of his parliamentary party, the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) who plays the son to his Steptoe. We do find a specific shopping list, although we have to go back to *The Scotsman* of 27 November 1984 to find it in the "Recipe for Scots Recovery."

It seems that the nationalist parties want £170 million set aside for the budgets of the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. I have news for hon. Members. That is almost exactly what the present budgets of those bodies now add up to — both substantially increased in real terms since this Government came to office. Then they want £30 million for guaranteed investment in the steel industry. Bob Scholey must have been reading his copy of *The Scotsman*.

In another document there is an eight-point plan called "Scotland can work", in which its authors, on the one hand, call for a programme of public works, expanded industrial aid, a restructuring fund for industry, higher pensions, social security benefits and overseas aid — perhaps to England—and, on the other hand, call for a cut in VAT, income tax, national insurance contributions, petrol duty and vehicle excise duty.

Perhaps Scotland can work, but clearly the SNP cannot add. Perhaps someone should tell the party what happened to the price of oil. It will not know, because last June, when the Scottish Grand Committee had an important debate on the oil industry in Scotland, so far as I can gather SNP Members were not even there. I suppose that they boycotted that Committee, just as they boycotted the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that, even with the cut in oil prices, the revenue available to the Treasury would be in excess of £4 billion? Considering the size of Scotland, would that not enable us to carry out any of the plans mentioned?

Mr. Lang: As over the past 10, 15 or 20 years, the hon. Gentleman lives in a pie-in-the-sky world in which he assumes that all oil revenues derived from the North sea would automatically fall to an independent Scotland. I am glad to say that we have the views of the hon. Member for Dundee, East on regional policy from the same report in *The Scotsman*. It said that the SNP

"favours reform of the present range of regional grants"—

we have now done that—

"but argues that the whole of Scotland should be eligible for these in some form or other."

That is precisely the kind of blanket, everyone-gets-a-prize, Socialist type of policy that characterises the lurch to the Left that the nationalists have taken in recent years. But it is not a regional policy, unless of course the hon. Member for Dundee, East regards Scotland as a region. Perhaps he was on stronger ground when, over the weekend, he predicted a Conservative victory in the next general election.

The essence of regional policy is the selection for special help of areas that are relatively disadvantaged. Before I turn to our regional policy in more detail, let me deal more broadly with the monstrous canard, put about by nationalists and Socialists alike, that Scotland does not get its full share of central Government expenditure. It simply is not true.

Identifiable public expenditure per head of the Scottish population is 25 per cent. higher than that in England — £2,210, compared with £1,761 — while the figure in Wales is £1,927. It is right that that should be so because of the special needs and geographical circumstances of our two countries. This can be seen in almost every departmental programme: on housing £126·50 per head in Scotland and £67·40 in England; on education, £392 compared with £284. On health and social services the figure is £428 compared with £336. In local government the current expenditure provision for next year amounts to £638 per head against £535 in England. Our rate support grant stands at 56 per cent. The rate for England is 46 per cent.

So, too, in regional policy the Government's concern for Scotland's special needs is recognised. With around one tenth of the British population, we have almost one third of those who qualify for regional aid. That is a higher proportion than before the 1984 changes. It is twice the British average and it includes 65 per cent. of the Scottish work force.

Last year, regional aid in Scotland through development grants and selective assistance amounted to almost £160 million — over 30 per cent. of the total in Great Britain — compared with only 21 per cent. when we came to office in 1979. That £160 million was equivalent to £62·48 per head in Scotland, as against £19·21 in the rest of Britain. In other words, taxpayers in other parts of the United Kingdom are, along with Scottish taxpayers, helping to support many Scottish industries.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The Minister will be aware that his Department is considering a request from the Highlands and Islands Development Board for full upgrading to development status for the Invergordon area, which status it had prior to the 1984 review. There is clear evidence that investment is being lost to other parts of the country or abroad because of the failure to have such advantageous rates. I appreciate the fact that the Minister cannot give a definitive response today, but will he confirm that his Department will look at the matter as sympathetically, supportively and quickly as possible?

Mr. Lang: I certainly recognise that there are problems in the Invergordon area, but I can hold out no great hope for the hon. Gentleman that assisted area status boundaries are being reconsidered. I draw to his attention the considerable and growing success of the enterprise zone in Invergordon. There were nearly 100 jobs a year or

so ago, 200 by the turn of the year, and now there are about 300. The hon. Gentleman can derive considerable satisfaction from that.

I believe, and the Government believe, that it is right, given our problems, that other parts of the United Kingdom should help Scottish industries. But against figures of the kind that I have given, I do not know how the nationalists have the gall to raise this subject for debate.

The right hon. Member for Western Isles gave the impression that the Government no longer care about regional policy. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the figures that I have given show. We have made clear our commitment to regional policy on repeated occasions. We included it in our election manifesto; we emphasised it again in our White Paper on regional industrial development; and we are giving effective proof to it in a wide range of measures available for industry in the regions. It must be remembered, of course, that regional policy is not the main source of the Government's support for industry. More important is a stable economic base with low inflation, sound monetary policies and a favourable tax regime, better training and good industrial relations. We have achieved all those. But regional policy continues to have an important part to play.

Mr. Heffer: I come from an area of high unemployment. In fact the area had special development status provided through the efforts of my Government. Will the Minister explain to the House why, in areas like mine and the north-east, unemployment has increased? Is it not precisely because of the Government's failure to continue the previous regional policy?

Mr. Lang: I cannot accept the connection between the two aspects that the hon. Gentleman mentions. There is no provable link between the change in regional industrial policy and the rise in unemployment. Indeed, the development of job creation over the past three years has coincided with the changes in regional policy which we have pursued.

We believe that the present pattern of assisted areas is a fair reflection of the relative needs of different parts of the country. For example, in west central Scotland and parts of south Wales we have older industrial areas where employment in the traditional industries is in decline and where special efforts are needed to help the transition to a modern industrial economy. That is why those areas enjoy the highest level of assistance under our current policies. Other areas, where the need is less great but where help is still needed benefit from regional selective assistance and the value of that incentive should not be understated. The advantage of RSA is that it can be used flexibly and can be tailored to the needs of the individual project by phasing and timing grant instalments. It can ensure that the highest possible level of assistance is available under EEC rules for projects which offer substantial economic and employment benefits. Since May 1979 offers totalling £378 million have been made under RSA, creating or safeguarding over 140,000 jobs.

There are, of course, those areas that do not qualify for regional assistance at all. I know that that can be a source of grievance, particularly in places which had long been accustomed to the benefits of assisted area status. But it is important to remember what regional policy is designed to achieve. It is not a continuing subsidy and still less is it an aid to which any one part of the country has a prescriptive right. Rather it is a means of helping particularly disadvantaged areas to overcome their particular difficulties relative to other parts of the country.

The right hon. Member for Western Isles referred to the reduction in expenditure on our present policy. The effectiveness of a policy should not be judged by the amount of money put into it, but rather by how efficiently that money is directed. If we were, for example, to quadruple expenditure, the policy certainly would not be four times more efficient. On the contrary, there would be massive problems of deadweight and job displacement, and the implications for higher taxation and inflation would be to undermine the steady growth and recovery of the economy that we have been achieving. The new regional development grants are linked to the creation of jobs specifically to ensure that large Government subsidies are no longer handed over to capital-intensive projects which cost a great deal of money but provide very few jobs and would probably have gone ahead anyway. I am sure everyone recognises the sense of what we did.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): Is the Minister telling the House that, given the criteria he has laid down, he thinks that regional policy is succeeding?

Mr. Lang: I think that regional policy is succeeding in giving better value for money to the taxpayer and in directing help to the areas where it can be more productive in job creation.

Any scheme of incentives, however well designed, must be judged by how it works in practice. We now have two years' experience of the new policy, and clear evidence that it is working, helped no doubt by our decision to strengthen our "one-door" approach in Scotland with the transfer of the administration of regional development grants in Scotland from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Scottish Office. In Scotland alone, some 3,250 projects have been approved for regional development grant since the new scheme was introduced. That represents an investment of around £450 million leading to the creation of over 29,000 jobs.

As for the lurid predictions of doom and disaster with which the announcement of changes in the policy were greeted two years ago, it has not happened. Economic recovery has continued. New companies are springing up with a net increase of 1,400 in Scotland last year, and no fewer than 50,000 more Scots are in work than at the last election. Scotland continues to rise in the gross domestic product league table and now lies third, compared with eighth 15 years ago. Our output and productivity, particularly in manufacturing industry, continue to rise faster than in the rest of the United Kingdom and average Scottish male manual earnings are now second only to the south-east of England.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Since the hon. Gentleman is giving us a roll-call of statistics, how does he reconcile the progress that he has outlined to the House with the fact that the coal industry in Scotland has contracted at a greater rate and with a greater loss of jobs proportionately than any other place in Britain?

Mr. Lang: That makes my point for me. It is precisely because we have had to contend with such major structural changes and with the decline in and loss of jobs in so many

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of our heavy industries that the net increase of 50,000 jobs, which means many more jobs being created than that figure suggests, reveals the success of our policy.

Scotland has an enviable reputation in the attraction of new inward investment and, indeed, in the five years that Locate in Scotland has been operating its one-door service for potential investors, planned investment totalling more than £1·9 billion has been won, bringing with it the prospect of more than 38,000 jobs, the majority of which are new jobs. Those jobs will replace the industry to which the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) referred. It has been a record of growing success — and it is continuing — in which our regional assistance programme has played an important role.

By securing this new investment in Scotland we achieve not just taxation benefits for the United Kingdom economy as a whole, but we secure access to the latest technology, opportunities for suppliers, improved management techniques, better employment opportunities and the creation of real jobs. We believe that we have a lot to offer and that we should play to our very real strengths in marketing Scotland.

No discussion of the Government's regional policy, particularly as it affects Scotland, can ignore the role of the Scottish Development Agency. It has proved an effective and flexible instrument in helping to improve the Scottish economy. That was confirmed by the recent review. Since 1975, the SDA has spent over £940 million and its budget this year is £136 million. Over the life of the SDA, and particularly since 1979, its resources have increased both in cash and real terms and the contribution made by the SDA in tapping Scotland's resources of inventiveness and awakening a new spirit of enterprise is of great importance.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Since the Minister is so concerned about the Scottish Development Agency and the work it does, why do the Government intend to cut its capital programme from £61·6 million in 1986-87 to £57·7 million in 1988-89? That does not seem to be much of a commitment to the SDA.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is being extremely selective in his use of figures. I have already pointed out that we have increased the budget of the SDA in real terms by a substantial amount. Its creative role in identifying new forms of public-private partnership and its imaginative approach to development programmes have borne fruit in such major projects as the development of the Scottish exhibition and conference centre and an integrated approach to the regeneration of areas such as Dundee and Leith. Its joint involvement with my Department in the Locate in Scotland operation has increased awareness throughout the world of Scotland's advantages as a site for internationally based advanced technology companies. Only lack of time prevents me from enlarging on the SDA's important and growing role in bringing help to rural areas. Suffice it to say that that is an aspect that I regard as important.

Another important source of regional aid derives from our membership of the European Community. For years the SNP was violently and bitterly opposed to our membership; now it tells us it is in favour of it. Perhaps one day it will get around to telling its own supporters.

Certainly Europe is good for Scotland. Over 40 per cent. of our exports go there and we benefit from grants and loans from the European Investment Bank, the European Coal and Steel Community, and the social fund. From that alone, Scotland's share of grants this year, at over £14 million, is the largest of all the parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I think that I can anticipate what the right hon. Gentleman is going to say.

Mr. Stewart: The point is that such grants have come on the judgment of the European Community to the most disadvantaged parts of the EEC area.

Mr. Lang: I thought that the right hon. Gentleman was about to press me further on the case for the Western Isles to be included in the special priority category. That is something we have been pressing hard. In the meantime, I am glad to be able to comfort the right hon. Gentleman by saying that we have doubled the subsidy for the Caledonian-MacBrayne services, which amounts to a 30 per cent. increase in real terms. There has also been substantial capital expenditure on new vessels and new terminals.

There is also the European regional development fund from which Scotland has done particularly well, having received no less than a quarter of total United Kingdom allocations. The fund has been an extremely useful source of revenue for local and other public authorities and has helped to finance a variety of infrastructure projects.

An important breakthrough was made by the Scottish Office two years ago when ferry vessels serving the Highlands and Islands were accepted under the fund. And when a new ERDF regulation was introduced last year for programme finance, as opposed to project applications, we were quick to take advantage of the opportunities afforded. Already two programmes have been approved by the European Commission—one for Glasgow worth £68·2 million—the first such programme to be approved —and one for Tayside worth £20·7 million.

It is against this background that our continuing success in securing a good — and a fair — deal for Scotland and for the United Kingdom as a whole is closely linked to the submission to the Commission of our regional development programme. The right hon. Member for Western Isles referred—as does this motion—to this programme. But in common with others, he misconstrued the contents of the document and its purpose.

It is first important to put the regional development programme into its proper context. The main ERDF regulation provides that:

> "Member states shall communicate Regional Development Programmes to the Commission and any amendments to them in the case of regions and areas receiving aid eligible for assistance from the ERDF."

What this means is that all member states are required to demonstrate that project applications for assistance from the ERDF relate to the problems specified in the relevant regional development programme. The regional development programme is therefore geared to achieving successful bids for ERDF. Without a regional development programme, it would not be possible to secure ERDF help.

In view of the role of the programme, it must of course be a very comprehensive document. The total United

Kingdom submission for the period 1986 to 1990 runs to 17 volumes. The Scottish section alone is more than 200 pages in length. The programme is an extremely detailed analysis of the various regions of Scotland. It contains information on the economic and social situation, development objectives, measures for development, financial resources and implementation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Is it true?"] The programme concentrates on both strengths and weaknesses alike. Indeed, without the latter, one would hardly expect to receive assistance from the European regional development fund, whose main objective is to correct regional imbalances throughout the European Community.

Against that background, it is particularly disturbing to see selective quotations in the national press which portray the programme as an indictment of current economic and regional policy. Nothing could be further from the truth and the Opposition know this.

The United Kingdom, and Scotland in particular, has benefited very considerably from the European regional development fund. Assistance of over £616 million has been won for Scotland since 1975. It is naive to believe that future ERDF support can be secured without some reference to the weaknesses and potential difficulties in the regions.

A particular point, which some hon. Members have overlooked, is that there is not a country within the European Community that does not want assistance for its less prosperous areas. Each country does so with the back-up of an appropriate regional development programme. There is not a single country among the 12 that would make a bid for ERDF aid by claiming nationwide prosperity.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The Minister has said that all countries in the Community submit programmes. Can he tell us of any other nation state which has made an assumption of such a poor economic performance as we have?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) had read all 17 volumes of the report he would be aware that we do not submit a programme based on such poor assumptions. I had a look at the history of the ERDF programmes. Between 1975 and 1978 the Labour Government secured £64 million from the fund. Of course the fund was much smaller then. However, between 1979 and 1986 we have secured £552 million. When they submitted their programme, did the Labour Government include unemployment assumptions? No, they did not. The Commission wanted such assumptions. However, did the Labour Government fail to submit such assumptions because they did not know what the unemployment assumptions were or because they did know?

Of course, the regional development programme contains assumptions—but I would stress that these are assumptions, not forecasts. The assumptions, and they are the same assumptions as those contained in the public expenditure White Paper, project what could happen if nobody did anything about current problems. This does not mean, however, that the Government are not determined to take every measure practicable to boost the economy, or indeed that many external circumstances—such as oil prices—may not change to our advantage. On top of all the efforts being made to generate more work from purely Scottish sources and the great success we have had in attracting overseas investment, we are determined to complement our own efforts with European help. It is vital that Scotland, and the United Kingdom generally, continues to get its fair share of European money and that is the purpose of all of our regional development programme.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The EEC report refers to a prediction of Scottish unemployment at a figure of 331,000 by 1990, assuming no radical change in Government policy before then. Was that the Government's prediction? If not, where did that figure come from? Does the Minister believe that the figure is accurate? If not, would he care to tell us now what his prediction for 1990 would be?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) cannot have been listening to me. The report contains no predictions and the Government have given no predictions. The Government do not forecast unemployment figures any more than the Labour Government forecast unemployment trends. The report contains assumptions and they are the same assumptions that have been made in the public expenditure White Paper and they are assumptions of what could happen if certain action was not taken.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Lang: The report is full of positive aspects, covering such promising growth areas as microelectronics, health care, biotechnology, food and timber processing, fish-farming and tourism, and of course our highly successful finance and banking sector. It is quite wrong to accept the ill-judged deceptions perpetrated by those who would present only doom and gloom by selective quotation, and it is disgraceful that the Labour party should seek to distort and undermine the balanced presentation of Scotland's case to the Commission.

Least of all is the Labour party qualified to criticise this Government's successful development of regional policy, or to call for more infrastructure spending. Yes, we have cut spending on industry under the Scottish block by 0·3 per cent. in the past three years in real terms, but we are getting better value for money. However, when we look at the same figures for the last three years of the Labour Government the figure is not 0·3 per cent. but 13 per cent.

It is almost exactly 10 years since that same Government slashed Scotland's regional aid programme by 40 per cent. overnight when they abolished regional employment premium. That was a loss of £60 million to Scottish industry — more than double that figure at today's prices. As if that was not enough, they slapped on a further burden of £200 million when they brought in the national insurance surcharge — Labour's tax on jobs. Those were two direct, vicious, panic-stricken assaults on Scottish industry—and Wales suffered the same fate—by a party that had lost control of events, two deliberate measures that destroyed thousands of Scottish jobs.

This Government have struggled consistently and with growing success to repair the damage and restore the economy. We know, because the former Labour Government proved it, that unemployment can be tackled only through the sound economic strategy which we are following. This includes keeping inflation down and encouraging enterprise. 1985 was the third successive year

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of steady growth, low inflation, and growing numbers of jobs throughout the United Kingdom. It includes a strong and effective regional policy. The new policy we introduced, at a time of rapid structural change, is bringing new jobs and new hope to Scotland and Wales. Above all, it is helping to restructure the Scottish and Welsh economies on a broader base in a way which will enable them to play their full part in the regeneration of the United Kingdom. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject this absurd motion and to support the amendment.

4.48 pm

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): I congratulate the Minister on his new office. His speech was persuasive except when he dealt with that impossible part of his brief relating to the application to the European regional development fund.

On that issue, no one expects the Government, when submitting an application for funds to ERDF or to anyone else, to present the weakest case. No one would expect the Government to roll out some of the more complacent speeches that we have heard from successive Secretaries of State for Scotland. At the same time, the Government must not lie. They must not pretend that they can say one thing to one audience and something else to another without both audiences hearing what is said. The Government must not behave like an opera singer bellowing away at the auditorium expecting a singer beside him not to hear him if he puts his hand over his mouth. We could not have expected the report to have remained confidential, and I do not expect for a moment that the Government thought that it would. I therefore thought that the Minister was trying to have it slightly both ways when he stressed that it was 17 volumes long and then accused the press of selective reporting. It would have been a little difficult for them to have printed all 17 volumes.

Many documents are now leaked. That is the contribution, if there be one, of the Xerox machine to the advance of civilisation. The Commission is less addicted even to attempted secrecy than the British Government. To circulate a document in the service of the Commission is to put it into the public domain. That has been the fact for some time, and there is nothing very wrong with it.

The Government have for once been caught out telling the truth. The truth is that, on present policies, with which the Government are determined to continue, there is no prospect of any significant reduction in unemployment until beyond the end of the decade. Their figures are quite precise. It is not just a projection, otherwise where does the 80,000 reduction come from? Such a figure is insignificant, however. Nor is there any prospect of a significant improvement in the circumstances of the worst hit regions. There is nothing shameful about the Government saying that that is the reality. What is shameful is indulging in the hypocrisy of pretending otherwise.

It is already abundantly and depressingly clear that the 1980s will be an incomparably worse decade for unemployment in Scotland and the rest of the country than were the 1930s. The attempt to half deny that there is a peculiar unemployment problem in Britain, especially, but not exclusively, in Scotland and Wales, produces some odd performances from Ministers.

The Secretary of State for Defence, when Secretary of State for Scotland, used to indulge in speeches of a bland complacency which were almost Panglossian. The present Secretary of State indulges in some odd intellectual contortions. Last Wednesday, he assured the House that Scotland has the highest percentage of employment in any comparable European country—63 per cent. as against 59 per cent. in Germany. Does he really believe that that figure is relevant? If so, what is he doing applying for regional aid? If the figure is valid, Strathclyde ought to be giving aid to Stuttgart, not the other way around. If he does not believe that the figures are relevent, why is he trying to throw sand in our eyes and those of the country?

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The right hon. Gentleman does not need me to give the answer. He knows perfectly well that if far more women work or seek employment in the United Kingdom, that affects unemployment levels and makes straight comparison between Britain or Scotland and the continental countries invalid. A substantial proportion of people who seek employment in the United Kingdom would not seek it in continental countries because it is not as customary for women to work in those countries.

Mr. Jenkins: Of course. I am indeed aware that the factor involved is the stronger tradition of women working in Scotland and the United Kingdom.I am not sure of the comparison between Scotland and England as the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not give those figures last Wednesday. The stronger tradition of Scottish women working has been accentuated by the excessive shift to service industry employment, which has been foolishly over-encouraged by the Government. That move has taken us out of line with France, Germany and Italy, let alone Japan. It leaves us in line only with the United States, which can afford it. We cannot. The United States produces a mammoth balance of payments deficit which can be financed only because the dollar is not like other currencies.

I was interested to see that the Secretary of State rejected an egregious leading question from the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on Wednesday. He spoke of an obsession with manufacturing industry which we must correct. He reverses the case. We have had a dangerous lack of concern for manufacturing industry. The Government have been far too much inclined to believe that service industries can solve our problem. The reason for the apparent figures that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is able to produce is the fact that more women are at work and there is a higher proportion of service employment, a great deal of it part-time and probably low paid. That factor conceals a male unemployment rate in Scotland and elsewhere which is completely out of line with anything to be found in France, Germany, Italy and the United States—let alone Japan —which is socially and nationally debilitating.

The Secretary of State is entitled to produce bogus statistics for a little exchange across the Chamber, but he cannot take them seriously. If he does, he is effectively saying that Scottish unemployment is much less serious than that of Germany, France and any other mainland European country, which is manifestly not the case.

Several extremely interesting points emerge in the submission to the regional development fund. There is a frank comment on the level of industrial investment. It is

not entirely in accord with what the Government often say. I shall quote from the summary, which I read with interest. I have not read the 17 volumes and wonder whether the Minister or the Secretary of State has. The summary says:

"In the present difficult economic climate, investment in directly productive industries is at a low level."

That is not what we hear from the Government a great deal of the time. The summary continues:

"In these conditions, infrastructure developments are doubly important in both stimulating industrial demand and in creating new construction jobs, as well as preparing the assisted regions for new private investment in the future."

The summary makes a powerful point about innovation, research and development, and shows how they are associated almost inevitably with the headquarters of companies. I believe that the choice of headquarters is to a substantial extent associated with the site of political decision making. There is a real economic argument for Scottish devolution, including substantial economic devolution. Important innovation and decision making is drawn away to the south-east in particular and is associated inevitably with the foci of political power.

Mr. Maxton: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with the leader of the Liberal party that the alliance puts proportional representation before a Scottish Assembly?

Mr. Jenkins: It is essential to have proportional representation for a Scottish Assembly. I believe that one strong reason for the disappointing vote in the referendum was the considerable suspicion in Scotland about domination by one party caucus in one region of the country. There would have been a far stronger vote with proportional representation.

Mr. Maxton: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jenkins: No. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman to intervene once and I see no reason for allowing him to intervene again.

Next there is an extremely interesting and bland sentence that conceals a multitude of sins:

—"The UK Government takes account of expected ERDF receipts when planning public expenditure, and as a result the planned expenditure on the relevant programmes is higher than it would otherwise be."

That is a way of saying politely that ERDF money and other European money does not directly affect the total of public expenditure that goes to the regions. Speaking from direct experience, I have no doubt that the United Kingdom Government's persistent unwillingness to agree to additionality—to let money flow straight through to a project — has been a marginal disincentive to the United Kingdom receiving as much money as otherwise it might have received.

The Government are also rather bad—which seems to me to be very foolish—about drawing attention to the part that the ERDF and other Community funds have played in particular projects. The ERDF was crucial to the building of the Scottish exhibition and conference centre. It provided slightly over 30 per cent. of the capital cost. Alas, at the opening ceremony which I attended — I forget whether the hon. Gentleman did — no reference was made to this, which caused considerable affront to the director-general of the ERDF who had come to Scotland for the ceremony. It showed a little foolishness and a lack of skill and courtesy in presenting the case. However, the much more important point is the lack of additionality.

The other point that the Government have made is that Scotland has somewhat improved its relative position. That is a fact, but why has it improved its relative position? It is mainly because other countries and other regions, most notably the west midlands, have had their manufacturing industries decimated — at least — by the present Government's policies. There is an element of truth in the Government's case. Scotland's relative move up the table does not mean that the present levels of unemployment in Scotland are acceptable, but if there should be a movement forward of the economy generally Scotland is better poised to take off than are many other parts of the country.

There is one other statement in the report which seems to me to make very good sense:

"Regional prosperity cannot be achieved in the absence of national prosperity."

The Glasgow region is well poised to take off. In that sense, its relative capacity to take account of opportunities has improved. It does not assist Glasgow and the surrounding areas to pretend that everything is wrong and to cry "Woe" all the time. In the absence of the Government being prepared to give a stimulus to the economy along the lines laid down time and time again in the report, in particular to the regions which need it, that potential will not be realised, which will be a great and unnecessary waste.

5.3 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): This is an important and well attended debate. However, as my hon. Friend the Minister said in his excellent opening speech, it is just as well that the debate is not to take place next week. If we were to take the advice of the Scottish National party, hardly any of us would be able to reach Parliament next week. The SNP is urging Scottish Members to boycott flights from Glasgow and Edinburgh to London in November. If the boycott is not adhered to, those Members of Parliament who ignore it risk being photographed by SNP members, who are to keep a watch on Glasgow and Edinburgh airports. The *Glasgow Herald* says:

"If any member is sighted the fact will be publicised in his own constituency."

This morning I searched Glasgow airport for some time in the hope of finding SNP photographers. I hope that the SNP will be able to guarantee that next week I shall be photographed at Glasgow airport boarding a plane in order to be here in time for the opening of the proceedings of this House. I hope, too, that it will guarantee that the photographs are publicised in the local press. That kind of silliness characterises many of the SNP's utterances on the more serious matters that the House is debating today, notably regional policy and jobs in Scotland.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman has had a little fun with the boycott proposal, and I am sorry that he is a little disappointed that his photograph will not appear in the local press to show that he is doing his job. However, does he not accept that it is iniquitous that British Airways should be able to increase its fares on such a discriminatory basis in order to subsidise transatlantic services which have been hit by terrorist activity? Does this not result in a double jeopardy for Scotland? It is bad for regional policy and it is bad for business men. Scotsmen

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have to pay heavily to travel to London, and then they have to pay to go elsewhere because there are no direct international services from Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish business men do not need advice from the SNP on how to travel. British Airways has adequately explained its reasons for its fares structure.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the SNP's proposals for the revival of the Scottish economy. They are authoritatively described in the 3 September edition of the *Glasgow Herald* under the heading:

"SNP unveils plan to cut dole queue by 100,000."

They are also authoritatively described in the 9 September edition of the *Glasgow Herald* under the heading:

"SNP scheme to cut dole queue by 220,000."

It is remarkable that when referring to the same plan the SNP was able to double its alleged impact within six days. I suggest that those who plan SNP policies ought to buy a new envelope on which to do their sums.

I welcome what was said by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) about the prospects for the Central region. However, his most serious point related to the completely spurious row about the Government's submission to the European regional development fund. To say that this was a confidential document and that it had been leaked is absolute nonsense. It is a completely open document, and a copy has been placed in the Library.

The right hon. Gentleman's criticism of the Government's manufacturing industry policy amounted to a general criticism of the Government's regional policy of the kind that is constantly voiced by the Labour party and the SNP. Therefore, it is interesting to quote from a document that is equally non-confidential — the submission to the European regional development fund by the last Labour Government in 1978. It said:

"Even when the recession has passed, unemployment rates may remain significantly higher than has been usual in recent years . . . some areas may be badly affected by shipbuilding redundancies, others by a decrease of manpower in the steel, textile and clothing industries."

The document then had this to say about the service industries:

"Employment in service industries is likely to continue to increase, although not as quickly as in the past."

In that the Labour Government were wrong, because unemployment in the service industries has increased substantially under this Government.

The Labour Government continued:

"The recent decline in employment in manufacturing industry and the present under-utilisation of existing capacity suggests that this sector is not likely to be a significant source of additional employment in the Assisted Areas."

That is what the Labour Government said about employment prospects, and it shows the hyprocrisy of many of the statements being made now in criticising the Government's regional policy.

It is important for the House to recognise the crucial point made by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. Regional policy is about relative levels of economic activity, and not about absolute levels of economic activity. However one looks at the figures, it is true that Scotland's relative position and prospects have improved over the years and that they are much better under this Government than they were in 1978 or 1979.

It is also important that right hon. and hon. Members should recognise that some of the traditional economic arguments in favour of regional policy no longer apply. Those arguments, which applied not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the European Community, centred on the fact that regional policy was justified on the ground of economic efficiency to reduce the pressure from wage-push inflation in particular parts of the nation, or the Community.

That argument is no longer valid, but a general economic efficiency argument can still be made for regional policy is so far as it ensures that Scotland in particular and the United Kingdom generally receive inward investment, or at least those internationally mobile projects which they would not otherwise get. That would be a gain for the whole economy. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales will be able to reassure the House that regional policy will retain sufficient flexibility for such investments to be continued.

It is interesting to note that the right hon. Members for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) and for Hillhead, in criticising cuts in expenditure, suggested that if either of their parties was in government it would reverse the Government's decision to make regional development policy expenditure more job-related. That was a sensible decision by the Government. I must tell the right hon. Member for Hillhead that if his party is now committed to the European Community, as I believe it is, he will find the taking of replacement expenditure from regional development grants, which he criticised, to be a condition of membership of the Community.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say something about the effectiveness of the new job grant. This alternative to traditional regional development grants has been effective, especially for smaller firms and for firms which may be setting up and expanding with replacement capital expenditure, rather than with new plant and machinery.

Any Government would be put under inevitable political and economic pressure to change the rules on regional policy, because it is inevitable that areas that are excluded will make representations to be included. That is a political fact of life. It is important that there should be a period of stability in regional policy, the present balance of which is correct, and I hope that the Government will not yield to the inevitable pressures to indulge in change. It is important that the business man has a period of stability in which to allow regional incentives to work well.

5.14 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): First, I congratulate the two nationalist parties on securing this debate. All Labour Members agree that an effective regional policy is vital to Scotland and Wales. I hope that the whole House will join me in regretting the indisposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), who should have taken part in this debate. He would undoubtedly have outlined the problems of Scotland, about which he speaks with such authority.

My task is to illustrate the severe economic depression that afflicts Wales. The same situation exists in Scotland, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) clearly outlined in his opening speech. The difficulties in Scotland and Wales are very much attributable to the Government's seven and a half years of office. What is more, there seems to be little hope for the future if they remain in office.

Last week, the cat was let out of the bag by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who published details of a hitherto unpublished report from the Government to the European Economic Community.

The Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I shall clarify once and for all the status of this document. It is a draft document which was submitted to the European Economic Community as on previous occasions and, as on previous occasions, it was intended for publication. A copy of it was sent to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister can duck and weave as much as he likes, but the EEC believes the report to be true. It confirmed thinking within the Community on the situation in Britain today. The report was referred to in an interesting speech by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), and it stated that in 1990 unemployment in the United Kingdom would still be over 3 million. On Wales, there is the revealing submission that:

"The overall economic activity rate is lower than any other region of Great Britain and is expected to remain so during the period that this programme covers".

All I can do is to add those famous words of Aneurin Bevan

"Why look into the crystal ball when you can read the book?"

In Welsh debates on the Floor of the House, and in the Welsh Grand Committee, we have often attacked the Secretary of State for Wales for his optimistic forecasts, which seem to be so divorced from reality. In this report to the EEC, we recognise that our worst fears have been confirmed.

The employment figures speak for themselves. In Welsh industry, taking the manufacturing sector as a group, the fall in the period 1979-85 was 110,000, while for the production and construction industries as a whole, employment has fallen by 141,000. Overall industrial output in the third quarter of 1985 was 13·9 per cent. lower than in 1979. The Welsh mining industry has been decimated almost beyond recognition, and now we are told that further job losses are to be expected.

The same woeful tale can be told of our rail network. Last week the Secretary of State for Transport announced a 25 per cent. cut in funding to British Rail. That is bound to have an adverse effect on fares. Lines are put at risk in Wales. There will be no moves towards electrification and the public will suffer from a deteriorating service.

With regard to freight and the proposed closure of the Severn tunnel junction, it seems that instead of fighting for a larger slice of the trade British Rail is abdicating its responsibilities. By doing so it is endangering the job security of its work force and making worse the congestion on our already overcrowded roads.

Wales is a relatively poor area with declining heavy industry and slow industrial growth. That situation is marked by heavy unemployment and low household incomes. Certain districts, particularly our valley communities, have been badly hit. They are wonderful communities in every sense of that term. Jobs are at a premium, though. Depopulation has set in and massive efforts are now required to revive their dying infrastructure.

Everywhere in Wales, not just the valleys, the position is bleak. Therefore, one would hardly think that the way to tackle matters was drastically to cut regional aid. However, that is what happened. On 28 November 1984 the Government announced the changes. They also provided for a greater spread of the reduced regional aid funding to cover service industries.

We could all accept the need for change, the need to move financial assistance away from automatic subsidy of capital expenditure and towards incentives for employment. We could accept the need to ensure that aid is given to areas that are most seriously affected by unemployment, industrial decline and structural change. However, there was no justification for slashing aid in the way that the Government decided upon. It was purely a cost-cutting exercise. The need for change was perverted into yet another attempt to cut public expenditure. The Government will not recognise that the greatest waste of all is unemployment. When regional aid is cut unemployment is directly stimulated.

Our local authorities have felt let down by the Government. Many of them have taken considerable interest in the economic development of their areas because that is the most important issue that faces their citizens. Many imaginative schemes have been proposed, but the response from the Welsh Office has been inadequate and faint-hearted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has repeatedly called for Wales to be designated an assisted area, but his plea has fallen on deaf ears. Wages in Wales are falling behind but unemployment is rising. That blows sky high the Government's claim that low wages mean more jobs.

Now the storm clouds are gathering over Britain. There is persistent pressure on the pound. Mortgage rates have moved upwards and there are signs of more to come. The inflation rate is starting to move up again. There is a deficit in trade in manufactured goods and a more persistent deficit in our overall balance of payments. With the Government's policies our country is heading for disaster.

By contrast we have the imaginative proposals of the Labour party that are contained in the new publication "Investing in People". *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members will be smiling on the other side of their faces before long. There is one sentence in that document which will give hope to so many people in Scotland and Wales. It says:

"Every time we create a new job we turn a claimant into a taxpayer, a wasted life into a productive one."

Investing in our people is the way forward for Britain, and the sooner the Government are turned out the better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I am grateful for the brevity of the previous three speeches. Those hon. Members who will be replying to the debate hope to catch my eye at 6.30 pm, so I appeal for continued brevity.

5.25 pm

Mr. Alexander Pollock (Moray): I preface my remarks with two observations of a personal nature. Like other hon. Members, I am sorry about the indisposition of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), the Opposition spokesman on Scottish affairs, and I should like to be associated with the expressions of recovery for him at the earliest possible time.

I am delighted to have been preceded in the debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and should like to place on record that during his term in

[Mr. Alexander Pollock]

the Scottish Office I found him always willing to listen to the problems facing my constituents and with a welcome anxiety to help whenever he could. In particular, in the context of the debate, I should like to pay tribute to the launching in Scotland during his term of office of the programme for rural initiatives and development and for giving greater focus to the rural aspects of the work carried out by the Scottish Development Agency. Indeed, he was able to assure rural Members of Parliament such as myself that, on a per capita basis, a disproportionately larger sum was being spent in the rural areas of Scotland than strict demographic criteria might warrant.

The most interesting and curious aspect of the motion is its timing. It will not have escaped notice that on Saturday the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) made what was, presumably in his terms at least, an important speech in Wales. According to *The Sunday Post*:

"Welsh and Scottish Nationalists were urged yesterday to 'stand shoulder to shoulder' because of the likely prospect of a third Conservative Government. The call came from SNP chairman Gordon Wilson, MP for Dundee East, in a speech to Plaid Cymru's annual conference near Llanelli".

He went on:

"Our two parties have made arrangements to take advantage of a hung Parliament, but we must face the likelihood of a third term of Thatcher and all that implies".

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman must take into account the fact that I suggested that there might be a constitutional crisis because of the Tories winning on English votes. The hon. Gentleman knows the danger of the Scottish Conservatives becoming extinct at the next election.

Mr. Pollock: We faced that danger in 1979 and 1983 and successfully overcame it and I am sure that we are ready to meet it again.

We know that the leader of the Liberal party once told his troops to prepare for Government, but it is unusual to tell one's troops to prepare for defeat and the political wilderness. If the hon. Gentleman finds that hard to follow he should remember that he has already made it clear to his conference delegates that in no way will the nationalists play any part in working with the next Conservative Government. The electors of Moray expect a rather different attitude. They look to their Member of Parliament to work as best he can with the Government of the day in promoting the proper interests of his constituents.

I was puzzled as to why the hon. Gentleman's speech was made in Wales rather than in Scotland, but then the reason became quite clear. It is comparatively easy to talk to another party about the attraction of an alliance but rather more difficult to do so closer to home, especially in one's own constituency when its association chairman has just resigned, according to the press, to campaign against the party's neutralist defence policy. It might also have been rather unwise to make such a speech in Thurso, where the local Scottish National party branch is openly at odds with the party leadership on nuclear policy.

Regional policy must be vigorously pursued as an important aspect of overall national economic policy. Certainly hitherto the Government have shown a welcome determination to do just that. For example, following the major regional policy review which took place earlier in this Parliament, the Government properly recognised the special needs of the Forres area in my constituency and allowed it to retain assisted area status. But of even more significance was the decision earlier this year by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to extend, subject to the approval of Parliament, the area of the Highlands and Islands Development Board to include the areas of upper Speyside and west Moray in my constituency. The relevant statutory instrument to carry out that action will be debated in the House next week.

Although there is no sign at present of an alteration in the budget allocated to the Highlands and Islands Development Board, I trust that the funding will be monitored carefully in the light of any pressure on funds that may emerge following the extension into the Moray area. I suspect, however, that in future regional policy such all-embracing geographical demarcations of areas in need of special recognition will be less likely to find favour with our economic masters. Instead emphasis is much more likely to be placed on sectoral aid for specific economic activity.

I do not necessarily quarrel with that approach provided that due recognition is given to those sectors that most properly qualify for support. Due regard must be given to those traditional industries that will remain of critical importance long after transient developments have disappeared. An example is farming, whose importance in areas such as my constituency was well summarised recently by the farming editor of *The Press and Journal*, Mr. Bill Howatson. On 16 October, he wrote:

"It is salutary just to take stock of the importance of farming in the economy of the region"—

that is to say Grampian region—

"and to bring some of the facts to the attention of the general public, whose conceptions of the industry are solely based on milk lakes, butter mountains and feather-bedded farmers.

By stark contrast to the overall Scottish position where agriculture accounts for less than 4% of total industrial output, in Grampian, the equivalent figure is more than 7% and worth £350,000,000.

Agriculture and related industries accounted for an estimated 18·6% of regional output in 1984 and the farming tentacles stretch far into the wider economy."

How is farming best helped? The Government as a whole, or failing that the Scottish Office at least, should consider issuing a new paper on what is expected from our farming community. The last such policy paper, "Food from our own Resources"——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): There was another one after that.

Mr. Pollock: —has now been overtaken. The Government now need to issue guidelines, within the framework of European membership, to show what they expect from the farming community. I say to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that one thing that would not be wanted in any such paper is the kind of comment recently published in the Labour policy paper which stated that the intention was to see that agricultural land and buildings were brought within the rating system.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman say something about the likely impact of the poll tax which his party intends to impose on farmworkers and other people in rural Scotland?

Mr. Pollock: I regret giving way, as the hon. Gentleman has failed to understand the rationale behind the new welcome community charge, which we trust will be introduced in the Gracious Speech.

Another suggestion which is of relevance, not just to the farming community but to the wider business community, and which hon. Members should consider is the merit of a two-tier interest rate system. That system is operated by many of our partners in the European Community. My constituents find it hard to understand why, when there is a financial crisis, no distinction is drawn between those local business men who must borrow as part of sound business practice and those international speculators whose motives are utterly different.

There is no especial difficulty in offering subsidised credit to one part of the community. That is what happens with French farmers. The Government merely need to subsidise the lending institution which can then borrow at the going rate on the financial market and lend more cheaply to farmers, or whoever the beneficiaries might be.

Another beneficiary could be the textile industry, which is of great importance to rural economies, including Elgin and Keith, both of which are in my constituency, but unfortunately outwith the Highlands and Islands Development Board's extension. Those communities would benefit enormously from being able to plan with confidence in a stable atmosphere rather than in the current uncertainty. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary replies he will say whether his Department and the Scottish Office are willing to explore this matter further with the Treasury.

The relationship of company headquarters to their manufacturing bases was touched on by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). Too often in recent years too many of the decision makers in board rooms have moved further and further from the social and economic fabric on which their profits rest. Clearly, as recent events in the whisky industry have shown, moral persuasion and principle are insufficient weapons to bring them closer. I wonder, therefore, whether a different appeal could be made, an overt appeal to the pockets of board members by way of tax incentives for making a worthwhile contribution to the arts or to other worthy causes in their work forces' locality. That would be better than money being spent on grander settings elsewhere for reasons of national or international prestige. Such incentives might provide a worthwhile route back to the re-creation in those companies of local loyalties, local commitments and investment by those whose money is made largely from the remoter regions.

In short, for a successful regional policy, new ways must continually be sought to develop an ever stronger partnership between central Government and those businesses on which the regional economy must continue to rely.

5.39 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The hon. Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock) touched of an important point, and I thought that he was going to develop it. He said that companies whose headquarters were away from the manufacturing base might become more and more remote in their policy decisions. That has important implications for regional policy. Our experience in Wales is probably similar to that in Scotland and in many of the English regions. We have discovered that when the first ill winds of a depression blow, the branch factory is closed first, and the headquarters last the longest. If fiscal incentives were available to companies so that they located their headquarters in development areas in Scotland, Wales and the depressed parts of England, it might have a significant impact on unemployment. It would certainly be worth exploring that avenue.

It is also worth looking at regional policy in a general context. The motion has been drawn broadly enough to cover the English regions as well as those of Scotland and Wales. After all, both the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru recognise that it is not only Wales and Scotland that have severe problems, but that parts of the north of England and Merseyside also have tremendous problems and need a much more effective regional policy.

On 24 July 1979 the then Secretary of State for Industry, the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), referred to the changes that the Conservative Government would make to regional policy and said:

> "We propose to toughen the criteria for the provision of regional selective assistance under section 7 of the 1972 Act, and for assistance that is not attached to regions but covers the whole country under section 8. Those changes have the efffect of concentrating assistance from the taxpayer on the areas of highest unemployment and most need for improvement in economic structure. They will focus and concentrate the benefits of regional policy".

The right hon. Gentleman said that in 1979, when unemployment in Wales amounted to 73,000. He continued:

> "It is always open to the Government of the day to introduce changes when circumstances change."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1979; Vol. 971, c. 364.]

In the next four years circumstances certainly changed. Indeed, by 1983 circumstances in Wales had changed so much that that figure of 73,000 unemployed people had increased to 162,000. Consequently, there was a new Government regional policy. The 1983 White Paper, Cmnd. 9111, contains an interesting quote on page 3, under the heading, "The Government's Approach". It says:

> "Imbalances between areas in employment opportunities should in principle be corrected by the natural adjustment of labour markets. In the first place, this should be through lower wages and unit costs than comparable work commands elsewhere."

That was the new regional policy in 1983, after the previous policy had visibly failed to work. We have now had two years of that new policy, and unemployment in Wales has reached 180,000. If the 40,000 or 50,000 people benefiting from temporary jobs and under the MSC schemes are included, the figure is nearer to 250,000.

The Government's regional policy has failed abysmally. Even those bits of regional policy that have worked have not been effective enough. A document by Moore, Rhodes and Tyler was published a few months ago and summarises the position well. It is entitled, "The Effects of Government Regional Economic Policy", and on page 12 it says:

> "However, the scale of the regional problem as a whole in relation to what regional policy can be expected to achieve is alarming. For regional policy to have solved the regional problem in the decade of the 1960s, policy would have had to have been two to three times more effective than it actually was. For regional policy to have solved the regional problem during the decade of the 1970s, regional policy would have had to have been about three times more effective that it actually was."

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

The authors pull their punches when it comes to the 1980s by concluding:

"The case for an active regional policy in the 1980s therefore remains strong."

I have rarely seen such an understatement. In fact there has been an active withdrawal from regional policy.

In Wales the unemployment situation is now desperate. The European regional development fund report, which has been leaked, or published, depending on whose version one accepts, draws attention to the situation in a quite graphic way. It says:

"for the Production and Construction industries as a whole employment has fallen by 141,000 . . . industrial output in the third quarter of 1985 was 13·9 per cent. lower than in 1979 . . . Unemployment rates in Wales have been higher than those in Great Britain as a whole for a very long time. The recent national industrial decline coupled with the disadvantages of Wales has meant that the rates in Wales are now very high."

Indeed, 180,370 people are now unemployed in Wales, and that has a direct bearing on wage levels. In April 1985 the average wage for a man in Wales was £179 a week, compared with £233 in the London area. Thus, a man in Wales earns on average £54 a week less than his counterpart in London, and in the poorer parts of Wales the discrepancy is even greater. The figure for women in Wales is £119 a week, compared with £154 for women in the London area. Again, women in Wales earn on average £35 less a week. Thus, Wales suffers not only from higher unemployment but from low wage levels. That, in turn, depresses purchasing power and the economy as a whole.

When unemployment in the midlands and in the south-east of England becomes worse, there is an active withdrawal from regional policy. Bodies such as the Welsh Development Agency are supposed to concern themselves with the development of the economy, but during the past six or seven years the WDA has not been sufficiently interventionist in its approach. It has not adopted enough initiatives to try to overcome the problems facing Wales. It has had to try to get a return on capital investment that has been targeted by the Government, and as a result it has not been able to use its money in the best way socially. In the corporate plan for 1984 to 1990 the factory investment programme was slashed from £11·5 million to £6 million, yet we need more factory building, not less.

Regional regeneration will not be achieved purely by more incentives. We need a direct capital investment programme in Wales, and no doubt in Scotland too. We need such a programme for social projects, such as housing. After all, 100,000 houses in Wales are unfit for habitation in one way or another and need to be improved. Old-fashioned schools need to be replaced, and hospitals need to be improved, along with community facilities. Probably all the regions need work done on water and sewerage. The Welsh water authority has a £1,000 million programme that it could get on with more rapidly if more money was available.

In April, in its response to the report of the Welsh Affairs Committee, the Welsh water authority said:

"The projected capital programme assumes that the authority's income base remains firm and that the increased capital can be made available without unacceptable increases in the level of charges or increased borrowing requirements."

The truth is that bodies such as the Welsh water authority need more money so that they can get on with their much needed work if we are to overcome the unemployment problems of Wales.

We also need direct expenditure on economic projects, such as factory building. We need more investment in industry. The development of new coal mines, such as the Margam mine, should be accelerated and money should be pumped in. One of the most important factors for Wales is the development of communications. I refer not only to electrification of the railways, but to our roads.

For 20 years Labour and Tory Governments have concentrated spending on roads in Wales on those that run east-west, to the virtual exclusion of those running north-south. Although I appreciate the need for much of that spending on the A55 and the M4 if traffic congestion is to be relieved, the time has come for the north-south links in Wales to be a political and economic priority, with the modernisation of those roads being part of the economic regeneration strategy.

As today's debate has an important European regional dimension, it is appropriate to look forward in a European context. One of the most imaginative and far-reaching ideas, which could have an enormous impact on all of Wales—north, mid and south—is the construction of a major highway linking the A5 in north Wales to the M4 in south Wales. That would then serve as a primary route for Irish road traffic travelling to Europe through the new Channel tunnel.

The existing road service, using the M6 and M1, is fast becoming clogged with traffic, particularly around Birmingham and London. From a south Wales viewpoint there is a need for a fast, convenient road link from the M4 to the Channel tunnel. A north-south road in Wales, involving a rapid upgrading of the A5 in Gwynedd and a spine road linking it to the A470 at Merthyr Tydfil, would enable traffic to travel the length of Wales in under three hours. It could cut the journey time for Irish road traffic to the Channel tunnel by up to two hours.

The building of such a road would provide much needed job opportunities along its full length. If the EEC wants to be seen as making a strategic impact on Wales and as making critical improvements to transport links for Ireland, this project must surely commend itself to the EEC and would be a much more sensible approach than the present policy of scattering largesse like confetti on a myriad of minor local projects with no strategic vision or central economic purpose.

I call on the Welsh Office to open immediate discussions with the EEC on such a project with a view to getting a pilot study undertaken in 1987, a firm decision in 1988 and a rolling construction programme that will get the road in being by the middle of the 1990s. Its opening can be phased with the opening of the Channel tunnel. A scheme such as this would bring the vital impetus that is needed in the Welsh economy and would improve prospects for employment, especially in the construction industry. It would revolutionise communications in Wales and open a new era for our country.

A number of approaches to regional policy need to be rethought. We have possibly thought too much in terms of manufacturing industry, but there are great opportunities in Wales for service industries, such as the film industry. We already have the infrastructure for the S4C channel. We should be looking at our strengths. Universities are being closed, but education in Wales could

be a major source of new development. The agriculture industry is being attacked by Government policy, but we could be developing job opportunities in agriculture.

A desperate situation exists in my county of Gwynedd. Of the worst nine counties of England and Wales for unemployment four are in Wales, and Gwynedd is the fourth worst in England and Wales. In spite of that, only about a quarter of our land area is covered by development area status. That is not good enough.

The EEC needs to be much more effective in its policies for Gwynedd and a way has to be found for more EEC money to find its way to the county. The Government say that the answer may be tourism, but tourism is a seasonal industry in areas like ours and we need employment all the year round.

We are also threatened by the possible closure of nuclear power stations. If that happens there will have to be a major initiative such as those that we saw with BSC or by British Coal in areas hit by closures. We need something like a £50 million job replacement fund in the area of a nuclear power station closure in order to get alternative jobs.

More than anything, we need new thinking and new dynamism. We want to see the Welsh Office, in conjunction with the EEC, getting to grips with the problem. We need a Wales office in Brussels to make sure that Wales gets a fair crack of the whip from the EEC. We need a dynamic approach, but the approach by the Welsh Office is tired, lethargic, sterile and sullen.

If Wales is to have a level of unemployment similar to that in other small countries, such as Norway, where unemployment is 2 per cent., or Sweden, where it is 3 per cent. we need new ideas and a new dynamism. In the face of the failure by the Welsh Office, we can get that only if we have our own senate in Wales and dynamism growing from within Wales. I have encapsulated in my speech the failure of Government policy. That policy shows no sign of change. The Government have no new ideas, and that is why we condemn them.

5.53 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): As a Scotsman by birth and a Welshman by election, I welcome this debate although not the terms of the motion. I am sorry that more English hon. Members, particularly from the south, are not present because nothing would be worse than to create in Disraeli's words

"two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy."

Wales and Scotland may have relatively small populations when compared to England and we may be looked upon as being on the geographical periphery of these islands, but we are in the economic and industrial front line.

As history has shown, there is no greater stimulus to separatist movements within the two nations than the periodic fits of indifference displayed by the English establishment. It is that indifference that provokes a narrow, inward-looking nationalism that is, of course contrary to the true character of the Welsh and the Scots. That true character is an enthusiastic and intelligent internationalism.

The economic problems facing Wales and Scotland are not regional or peripheral. I think all hon. Members will agree with that. They are the problems of Britain writ large, and no more so than in my constituency of Delyn. In the last 15 years a quarter of the labour force in my constituency have lost their jobs. The two towns of Flint and Holywell currently have a male unemployment rate of 41 per cent. Delyn is a classic example of an area that has suffered massive structural unemployment because its local economy was too narrowly based, too over dependent on just two industries—textiles and steel.

We in Delyn realised fromthe start that we had to create a much more widely based local economy if we were to make a significant impact on the unacceptably high level of unemployment in the area. We could not have had more support from the Government in so doing. *[Interruption.]* I will gladly give way. I am glad that so many Opposition Members know my constituency better than I do. I will gladly give way to the hon. Member for Buenos Aires, or whatever the name of his Ayrshire constituency is, or to any of his fellow Scots or even to some of the Welsh hon. Members if they can contradict what I have said. [AN HON. MEMBER: "You do not know the constituency."] I do. I am speaking about the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). The name of his constituency keeps changing. Nothing more could have been done by the Government. That is not a quote from me because it was said by the chief executive of my borough council and I am sure Opposition Members will agree that he is an independent-minded man with no party political stance. Silence reigns in the Opposition.

The Government ensured that Courtaulds did not walk away from a community that had served that company for so long and so well. The Government gave Delyn the highest level of development area status. The Government designated the Delyn enterprise zone and backed it with over £8 million creating, in the words of the borough's chief executive John Packer,

"the most attractive industrial location in Wales."

Already the Delyn enterprise zone has made a substantial contribution to the developmet of a new, dynamic and diverse local economy, showing itself as an outstandingly effective instrument of regional policy.

Over 800 new jobs have been created since the designation of the zone in 1983. Over 60 per cent. of those are full-time male jobs. Over 80 per cent. are in manufacturing in a wide range of industrial activities such as packaging, clothes, frozen foods and electronics. Three major factories are still to open and a further 650 new jobs have recently been announced. The jobs that have been created are all new jobs and the companies locating in the enterprise zone are starting up or expanding. There has been no poaching of jobs from other areas. Again, in the words of our chief executive:

"Unemployment peaked in this area in 1982. There was a small reduction in 1983. Since then it has been relatively stable despite the Courtaulds redundancies in 1984-85. There is now the preliminary indication of a downward turn. Delyn's unemployment rate has fallen against the national rate. In other words, I believe the signs are we have hit the bottom of the trough. We have absorbed the major Courtaulds closure and are now beginning to see a slight improvement."

That trend was confirmed to me last weekend by Mr. Paul Jones, who is the manager of the Shotton jobcentre. He also has responsibility for the jobcentres in my constituency at Flint and Holywell. He said that the local job market was buoyant and that there were a remarkable number of vacancies. He added that he and his colleagues do not have to go out to local companies to market the centres because they have so many jobs on their books.

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

Contrary to the expectations of Mr. Jones and his colleagues, they have surpassed last year's figures for vacancies at this time of the year.

All credit is due to the Secretary of State for Wales and his team — and to Delyn borough council — for their tremendous achievement in bringing about such a significant turn around in the industrial fortunes of my area. But we must keep the momentum going. The enterprise zone approach has proved how effective an intensive localised response to the problems of unemployment can be. The problems that we now face are the problems of success — *[Interruption.]* I am glad to tell the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) that I am not joking. If the hon. Gentleman listens to me, he will realise what the problems are and that I am asking the Minister for his help. I am quite willing to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wigley: If we face the problem of success, why is it that Clwyd, with 18·7 per cent. unemployment, is one of the worst six counties for unemployment in Wales?

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman has not been following my speech. I saw him looking at his notes. I hope that hon. Members will not mind if I bring him up to date because, clearly, he was not concentrating. I was talking of the marked impact of the Delyn enterprise zone on unemployment levels in my constituency. I quoted the chief executive of the borough council and the manager of the local jobcentre, who said that unemployment had been decreasing. I am glad that that piece of good news has now been heard by the hon. Gentleman. It will brighten up his day.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: I have just given way and I shall not give way again immediately.

We must keep the momentum going. The enterprise zone has proved how effective an intensive, localised response to unemployment can be. Our problem is one of success. We are fast running out of space at Flint. The Delyn enterprise zone is smaller than the average in the United Kingdom, extending only to 263 acres, whereas the average size of enterprise zones is 360 acres. The amount of land available for development is only 136 acres, of which only 89 acres have been available for genuinely new development. The extension of the zone to cover the former Courtaulds Greenfield site would make up that deficiency by adding a further 102 acres. That would bring the zone up to the average size of enterprise zones in the United Kingdom and would give the private sector the incentive to invest at Greenfield.

In Delyn it is widely accepted by Ministers, officials and Members of Parliament that we have an enterprising, determined local authority. In the words of Dr. Norman Wooding, deputy chairman of Courtaulds, we also have a labour force

"second to none, first-class, hard-working, highly motivated and extremely flexible."

All we need is for the land that we have available for industrial development to be given enterprise zone status. When fully developed, the Greenfield business park will have the potential of creating 2,300 jobs. That will go a long way towards tackling local unemployment.

The Government have shown great concern for the problems facing Delyn and have provided an effective regional policy for the area. We look to the Welsh Office for a continuation of the strong support that it has given in the past. The Government have begun to reverse the industrial decline of the past 15 to 20 years and have achieved a reduction in local unemployment figures.

If we listen to the Labour party, unemployment suddenly started one day in May 1979 when the Prime Minister crossed the threshold of No. 10 Downing street. It conveniently forgets that unemployment doubled in Wales when it was in government. It conveniently forgets that major redundancies took place in my constituency amounting to the loss of more than 2,000 jobs. During that period some of my constituents had the misfortune to be represented by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)—luckily only some of them. At that time he was also a Minister at the Welsh Office, so he is doubly culpable.

I attack not only the record of the Labour party but its future policies, which were revealingly described by the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes)—he let his own cat out of the bag—as "imaginative proposals."

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): We need imagination to understand them.

Mr. Raffan: Exactly.

The mind boggles when we think of the Labour party's proposals. One presumes that the hon. Gentleman was referring to last week's report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies — that neutral body which estimated that the policies of the Labour party so far detailed would cost £10 billion. The others, which are less clearly formulated and are mostly drawn from the speeches of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), are so far uncosted, but were described as being "expensive". I cannot but find myself agreeing with the leader of Sheffield city council, Mr. David Blunkett — I do not usually find myself in agreement with a member of Labour's national executive committee—that the shadow Chancellor would have no option other than to raise the standard rate of income tax, and that he should come clean on that point.

The benefits brought to Delyn by the Government's outstandingly successful enterprise zone policy would be put in jeopardy if the Labour party had its way. The shadow Home Secretary, in a former incarnation, said of enterprise zones

"We shall have no more of them."

I am aware that Labour party policy has the habit of mutating, so in my speech during the Welsh day debate earlier this year I asked the hon. Doctor for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas), who now and then is brought in to give badly needed first aid to the Labour Front Bench, to say in his reply whether the party had changed its policy of open hostility to enterprise zones. He did not respond. I can only assume that the Labour party is still against them. I warn Labour Members that that is a vote loser second to none in Delyn. I warn my constituents that the 800 new jobs already created in Delyn enterprise zone and the many to come that have been announced will be in grave danger should the Labour party ever return to power.

The fundamental rethink of policy called for in this motion is required, not by the Government, but by the Labour party. The people of Delyn know that the

Conservative party, this Government, the Secretary of State and his team do not merely talk about putting people first, but actually do so.

6.5 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I am sure that the constituents of Delyn will read that speech in their local newspaper. I noted that the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) spent most of his time addressing the officials in the Box and I can only assume that they wrote his speech for him. But from my information it will not do much to save him at the general election.

In view of the motion tabled by the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru, I was interested in the speech by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) in Wales this weekend. It is clear from it that a Tory victory at the general election will best suit the SNP and PC. I only hope that the people of Scotland listened to his speech and are aware that the SNP want another Tory Government because the Scottish people certainly do not.

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxton: I will not give way. Two or three hon. Members still wish to speak.

It is a bit much for the SNP to attack the Government's regional policy in this motion when it played such an important part in ensuring that we had a Tory Government by voting against the Labour Government and bringing it down. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) is not present. He spoke about shipyards in regional policy, but some people in the Labour party remember SNP hon. Members standing in their seats in 1974, tearing up telegrams from Scottish shipyard workers who suggested that they should support the Labour Government's plans for the shipbuilding industry. It is a bit much for those hon. Members to preach to us about these matters.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Maxton: I shall not give way because we have a brief debate.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) is not in his seat. I asked him a question, which he answered, and then tried to ask him whether the alliance would vote against a Scottish devolution Bill which will be introduced by the next Labour Government, but will not provide for proportional representation. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) has made it clear that he will. Eighty-four per cent. of the Scottish people who have said that they want devolution have a right to know alliance policy on that before they decide how to vote at the general election.

Much of the debate has been about the European regional development fund report. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) should be congratulated on both it and a new book that he has just written and that has recently been published. I can recommend it to anybody. It is a good read.

There are two criteria against which we have to judge the report. The first is that it is a Government report. The Prime Minister misled the House last week when she suggested that it was manufactured by local government. That was a distortion of the facts.

The second aspect is whether the report tells the truth. We should like to know whether it does. It says that in 1990 unemployment will be as high as or higher than it is today. The Under-Secretary spent considerable time wriggling over whether the report included projections or assumptions—I am not sure what the difference is—but the report says that unemployment will be at least as high in 1990 as it is today. Is that true?

A number of policy assumptions are made in the report. Talking about the infrastructure in the Highlands, it says:

"the marginal nature of much of the economic activity means that even small savings in transport costs may make the difference between success or failure."

It lists the building of the Dornoch Firth rail crossing as a priority plan and comments:

"further investment on the rail network between Inverness and Thurso, in particular the proposed Dornoch Firth road/rail crossing will greatly increase the efficiency of the rail network and will be compatible with major track modernisation in the Inverness area".

That was set out in the Government's report to the ERDF, but the Government rejected the rail link because, although it was technically feasible,

"there was no sound economic case for a rail crossing"

on top of the £20 million road bridge. That goes completely against what the Government put in the report that they submitted to the ERDF. Not only that, but the Government were so inefficient that they did not bother to submit any Dornoch railway project to the ERDF. It is disgraceful that a Government can indulge in that level of duplicity.

I know that one or two other hon. Members still wish to speak, so I will conclude with one more quote from the document, though hon. Members may not believe that it is a quote from a Conservative Government. Talking about development objectives, it says:

"In urban areas, in order to improve economic performance, direct measures must go hand in hand with the renewal of ageing systems, environmental improvement, the reclamation of derelict land, upgrading of the housing stock and the adaption of commercial and industrial premises to provide suitable accommodation for small and medium sized enterprises."

If anybody believes that the Government's economic policy in Scotland, Wales or any other region has been about since 1979, he should look at the record. The people of Britain will do that in 1987 or 1988. When they look at the record, the Conservatives will be out and we shall be in.

6.14 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) told us that the SNP has said that it wants the Conservatives to form the next Government, but the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), the president of Plaid Cymru, told us on the radio yesterday that he wanted Labour to form the next Government.

I hope that the SNP and Plaid Cymru sort out their differences, bearing in mind their new pact——

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Best: No, I will not give way. I shall be happy to arbitrate on the two parties' difficulties on another occasion when we have more time.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do not our Standing Orders say that when an hon. Member has been unjustly attacked from both sides of the Chamber he has the right to reply? I should regard with

[Mr. Wilson]

the greatest reluctance, horror and dismay the election for a third term of the present Prime Minister and her Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member knows that it is up to each hon. Gentleman to decide whether to give way.

Mr. Best: I am glad that I have already been of assistance to the SNP and Plaid Cymru in sorting out some of the minor difficulties that they are experiencing over which party they wish to form the next Government.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said that we needed a direct capital investment programme. He visits many parts of Wales and is an assiduous attender in his constituency. If he looks around he will see that a direct capital investment programme is going on now. In north-west Wales, the area in which the hon. Gentleman and I are particularly interested, the latest programme of land reclamation works includes three major schemes with estimated individual project costs of over £500,000. In the period up to December 1987 it is planned to start construction of three further major road schemes, with a total estimated cost of £228 million. There are also plans for further substantial investment of £8 million in facilities at the Holyhead port in my constituency, and there is a substantial investment programme in water supply improvements and sewerage, at a total cost of £6·5 million. In addition, capital expenditure on improvements in the electricity network in north Wales will total £2·3 million.

I know that the hon. Member for Caernarfon usually travels by train, but if he drives to his constituency he will travel along the A55 where more than £400 million of Welsh Office money is being spent on improving the road. That will have the same effect on north-west Wales, in terms of the development of industry, as the M4 had on south Wales when it pushed into that area.

All that work adds up to a fairly creditable investment programme. It seems that the hon. Member for Caernarfon's answer to the problems of Wales is to build a major highway between the A5 and the M4. I do not know what he thinks the people of Wales will think of Irish pantechnicons rumbling through Wales, with all the associated environmental effects. At present, they can bypass Wales and preserve our environment.

I also do not know where the hon. Gentleman expects to get the money for his project. In the self-governing Wales advocated by Plaid Cymru, the people of the Principality will be ill equipped to provide the massive funds that presently come from the economy of the whole of the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon asks for more advance factories and complains that only a small part of Gwynedd is a development area. Does he seriously want advance factories in the Snowdon national park, or perhaps up Snowdon itself?

Mr. Wigley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Best: No.

Mr. Wigley: But the hon. Gentleman has made a personal attack on me.

Mr. Best: I usually give way to the hon. Gentleman, but his hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy will reply to the debate and I am sure that he will be able to deal with all the points that I am making.

The people of Wales have recently had the benefit of seeing Plaid Cymru's blueprint for Wales unveiled at its annual party conference in Tumble. Considering the way in which Plaid Cymru performed, the name of the place could not be more appropriate. If any of us thought that there was any danger of a cohesive and compelling set of policies emerging from Plaid Cymru, that fear was laid to rest at its conference.

I like both Plaid Cymru Members as individuals. We do not often cross swords and we can and do work together for the benefit of our constituents. Indeed, I have no doubt that if the hon. Member for Caernarfon had been a member of one of the important political parties in Wales he would by now have been a Minister wielding real political power. Sadly, that will always be denied him unless he is prepared to cross the Floor of the House.

The trouble is that Plaid Cymru is not worthy of the two hon. Gentlemen who represent it in Parliament. However, it is worthwhile to examine the blueprint set out at Plaid Cymru's conference recently and how it will benefit the Welsh economy. Plaid Cymru believes that Wales should leave NATO. Wales is a nuclear-free zone. I do not know whether that has been communicated to the Politbureau so that when the rest of the world is burning because of nuclear holocaust Wales will be preserved in some miraculous way. Being a nuclear-free zone did not have a dramatic effect on the way in which the tragedy of the Chernobyl cloud affected north Wales. The Plaid Cymru manifesto in 1983 said:

"No country could isolate itself from a nuclear conflict".

And yet isolationism, neutralism and a departure from the only Alliance that can preserve the freedoms of the western world is a significant part of Plaid Cymru policy.

Plaid Cymru is keen on agriculture. A press report under the heading "Farming Blueprint" describes a comprehensive policy for rural Wales which involves the establishment of a Welsh land commission to control the number and size of farms. How many farmers in Wales want to be controlled in number and size by a quango? The article says that a land tax would be introduced to deter very large farming units and that the suggested commission would buy farms to enable county councils to hold one fifth of all holdings for lease at low rents to new farmers.

I do not know whether Welsh farmers will look particularly favourably on the proposition that their land should be expropriated by a Government commission so that it can be let out to tenants or be deterred by a Government quango from operating large farming units.

In the energy debate Plaid Cymru decided by the narrowest of margins that we should not close all nuclear power stations in Wales. I am sure that there is no link whatsoever with the fact that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy represents the constituency with Trawsfynydd in it. Everybody knows that Plaid Cymru is opposed to nuclear energy, and some would say that the policy is cynical and drafted for purely electoral reasons.

The great panacea for Wales is said to be the creation of a senate—a senate which, incidentally, would be run by the Labour party because Plaid Cymru has only two of

the 38 Welsh seats. Plaid Cymru would, therefore, hand over the fortunes of Wales to the Labour party by the creation of a senate.

Experiments in self-government have been tried in Northern Ireland. None of them has been particularly successful and yet Plaid Cymru still is determined on that route. Its supporters seem to be blind to the overwhelming result in the 1979 referendum. The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said on that occasion that he recognised an elephant when it was in his back garden. Plaid Cymru seems to be surrounded by a safari park. Its members cannot see the writing on the wall.

Plaid Cymru has existed for 61 years. What has it achieved in that time? Workmen's compensation for pneumoconiosis? Not so, say the trade unions. They say that they were responsible for that. Was it responsible for S4C? The Government had already committed themselves to that. The Welsh Language Act 1967? I welcomed it, but it was introduced by a Labour Government. Even if Plaid Cymru were responsible for all those measures, not one of them directly affects the economic well-being of the Welsh people. That is not much of a record.

The 1979 Plaid Cymru manifesto called for an economic plan for Wales. We have heard that phrase elsewhere, but it usually emanates from eastern European countries with all the commensurate disaster. The reality is that Plaid Cymru is not the national party of Wales. It is not Plaid Cymru but Plaid Hanner Gwynedd. It is the county party for half of Gwynedd. Plaid Cymru holds only two out of 38 seats in Wales—the smallest number for any party in Wales.

I can understand why the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy wants to lurch his party to the Left. He realises that the only way that his party can gain any credibility in Wales is to try to be a better Socialist party than the Labour party in the valleys of South Wales. That is anathema to the people because if they did not vote Plaid Cymru they would vote for the traditional values for which the Conservative party stands.

The people of Wales realise that the answer to their problems rests with remaining a close and integral part of the United Kingdom. Only as part of the United Kingdom can we have a regional policy. Plaid Cymru policies would isolate Wales with all the terrors and misery that that would occasion to the Welsh people. Fortunately, after the next election that party will not have the chance to do that.

6.26 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I want to refer again to the European regional development fund report. Government reports seem to be helped when they are leaked. I hope that more Ministers will take the trouble to read the documentation submitted to Europe. I wonder whether the report needs 17 volumes to spell out that most people outwith the home counties know only too well about employment and industrial or housing and social issues.

Ministers have said that the reports were compiled mainly by the local authorities, but they carry the Government's rubber stamp and shame in their content. Of course, they argue for as much resource as possible from the European Community but regional policy does not really matter to this Government, north of Blaby. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and his Conservative predecessor believe in a fiscal blood-letting for the northern half of the United Kingdom.

My criticism of the Government's economic policy is of their total mismanagement of untold benefits. I am thinking of North sea oil revenues, the proceeds from the sales of public assets and a parliamentary majority in both Houses which leaves few legislative uncertainties.

The Government show absolutely no political commitment to Scotland. We heard the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) upstaging the leader of the Liberal party when we last debated industry in the Scottish Grand Committee. The hon. Member for Eastwood spoke of the Secretary of State for Scotland giving Ernest Saunders a dressing-down and about what was going to happen if he did not locate Guinness in Scotland. What has happened? Just a lot of political waffle from the Secretary of State. The leader of the SNP talked about Scotland having a greater share of higher paid employment and he focused on the need for more headquarters to be located in Scotland—as they should be—and in Wales. Reference was made to the need for better communications between the north and the south of Wales. Having travelled in the Principality, I can understand that.

We recently received a brochure about the M25. I say good luck to greater London, which is having this marvellous investment, but it is a great deal cheaper to build a mile of motorway and extend the M74 or the connections to Scotland and improve the connections in Wales than it is to improve the infrastructure in the metropolis.

Over the past decade, Glasgow has been trying to create a new role to overcome the problems of the recession in manufacturing in the west of Scotland. There have been a number of ego boosters such as the Burrell gallery, which was approved by the last Labour Government, the Scottish Exhibition Centre — to which the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) referred, but which I suggest in my cynicism owed more than a little to the by-election timing — and the city of culture nomination for 1990, for which the Government will not give any additional funding to Glasgow. All those are very helpful, although they are not compensating for the job losses in manufacturing. They do not appear to be denting the unemployment total, which now stands at 77,000 in the city of Glasgow and 200,000 in Strathclyde. They are also not overcoming the essential problem of diminished household incomes. If there were more people in jobs in the west of Scotland, and more people in better jobs, that would help both the public and the private sectors because it would boost both the manufacturing and service sectors.

I think that we should become a little more self-interested in Scotland. Earlier this year I noted that Strathclyde regional council pension fund, which is very substantial, was investing in high-tech in Hemel Hempstead. I wrote to the chief executive and I understand that the trustees are now taking a more earnest attitude to these matters. It is a bit much that such pension fund development should not be happening on our own doorstep.

The report identifies housing estates and their lack of environment, maintenance and repair besides the problem of youth unemployment and the lack of social and recreational facilities. It is ironic that it spells out in such detail the amount of vacant land and derelict industrial buildings in the Glasgow area, when there are grants available for people who want to plant trees. It might be

[Mr. Jim Craigen]

better to have a couple of forests in parts of Glasgow so as to obtain grants—the only trouble is that the grants are not available to the public sector.

I do not regard regional policy as being an act of charity; it is an act of Government responsibility. The Government are not exercising that responsibility. They should be worried about the extent to which there is over-development of land in parts of southern England, which is detracting from environmental considerations. Reference has been made to the cost of that development, but what about the difficulty of getting into and out of London? There is even talk of another air terminal at Heathrow, but cattle are sometimes treated better than the travellers going backwards and forwards between central London and Heathrow. The problem is one of over-concentration in the south.

This Government's regional policy is pure farce. The Minister said that we were looking for fair shares. Let us see more evidence of that in the policies that the Government pursue, quite apart from the 17 volumes that have been shipped over the Channel to Brussels.

6.35 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Plaid Cymru and Scottish Nationalist parties are glad that we selected this day and this topic for debate. It has been a lively debate, not least because certain Conservative Members are becoming very excited about the prospect of having to face Plaid Cymru and the SNP at the coming general election. I shall not spend time responding to the hysterical speeches of the hon. Members for Moray (Mr. Pollock) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), because I want to address the central issues of regional policy, which neither hon. Member did.

I want to follow the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) about the regional policy being, not an act of charity, but an act of Government responsibility. If anything has been shown by this debate, it is the lack of Government responsibility for the regions and nations of the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) cited the levels of public expenditure in Scotland per capita over and above the average for Great Britain, as though that were some great act of Government charity and benefit for Scotland. Yet the expenditure levels for social security, unemployment, housing and other social requirements, where they are higher, are so only because the need is greater. The whole point about regional policy is that its purpose is to correct imbalance rather than to provide charity for one region over another.

That relates to the specific point made by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), that we should view EEC expenditure in Britain, not as being in place of United Kingdom Treasury expenditure, but as additional to it, because there is a direct link between the regional input of the EEC fund and the regions affected by it. I am sure that all Opposition Members support that view.

The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) referred to the glossy brochure about Labour's programme — which is now available in the shops — which he described as imaginative. Some of us are interested in the small print of the imaginative Labour programme. We want to know how many of the 1 million jobs which the Labour party says it will create during its first two years in government will be created in the regions of England, Scotland and Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) dealt specifically with the role of the development agencies. I wish to refer to the Mid-Wales Development Agency, whose role the Government have undermined by changing the boundaries of regional policy. It makes nonsense to have an agency with specific responsibility for an area when that area does not qualify for the whole range of regional aid.

The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), in a characteristic speech, quoted the experience of his constituency. The submission to the ERDF says, in reference to Clwyd:

> "While the recent gains are encouraging, they have not, however, offset the major job losses of the period up to the 1980's. Furthermore job gains and job losses have not always balanced in individual areas within the profile area."

That sums up the whole argument. The new jobs that have been created since 1979 do not in any way make up for the massive job losses in basic industries during that period.

We must consider the way in which infrastructure investment is an integral part of regional policy. That was stressed by the hon. Member for Maryhill and also by my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon, who called for additional road expenditure in Wales. Regional policy must be seen in the context of the British economy during the past few decades. There was a period when regional economists, and even Government Ministers, used to make speeches as though the so-called regional problems were improving, if not disappearing.

Since 1979 we have seen a return to the geography of the great depression of the 1930s, with the addition of a new generation of depressed areas to the map of the 1930s — the English regions of the west midlands, the north-west and the inner cities. That has been superimposed on the traditional division — the so-called north-south divide, which is also an east-west divide. It is a divide betwen nations, regions and classes in Britain. Whatever set of indicators we take, whether it is direct unemployment, level of income, educational opportunity, or the social indicators of health care, housing or perinatal mortality, or inward of outward migration, the league table is always the same. Northern Ireland is always at the top, with its bitter and tragic history, with Wales and the north and north-west of England vying with Scotland for second place. If there have been changes in the league table, as in some figures for Scotland, it is because other areas have declined more. Always the south-east of England is at the bottom of the inequality league. That always masks the inequalities of class, race and gender in the inner city areas of cities such as London.

Regional disparity has not simply been caused by declining major industries. The argument used to be that job losses were caused by the decline in coal, steel, textiles, shipbuilding and other old basic industries. In recent decades there has been an increasing over-dependence of the regions outside the south-east of England on branch plants that have no high skill functions, no significant research and development and a small job multiplier effect.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said, the real regional disparity is between the outer metropolitan golden triangle in the south-east, taking in Bristol, Southampton and Cambridge, and the

rest of Britain. In this triangle are the corporate centres, the head offices of companies, the research and development units, the marketing and sales centres, the banking, financial and computer services and so on. About 50 per cent. of research and development in private company establishments and in public departments is located in this area.

There is also the secret regional policy in Britain, which is the £8·3 billion equipment budget for the Ministry of Defence. Defence procurement and aerospace investment are as much part of regional spending as the official regional development policy. Defence procurement and aerospace investment are located mainly in the south-west and south-east of England. Whereas the official regional policy will have been cut by half between 1980 and 1987, the secret regional policy has increased rapidly. We need to ensure that, in our study of regional policy, public spending on defence procurement, which is not usually regarded as regional policy, is so regarded.

The effects of the higher interest rates and exchange rates, which have been such a feature of Thatcherite policy, should also be regarded as regional policy. They affect manufacturing in regions outside the south-east more directly than they do in the prosperous regions.

The massive decline of the depressed regions is set out in the ERDF proposal document. We have already heard the figures for Wales, and I shall not repeat them, but we are talking about job losses in production and construction of 141,000. We must have a clear statement from the Minister as to the status of this document. As has been emphasised in the debate, the Government cannot have it both ways. Either, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said, this is an official document, written, or at least collated, by the Government, and therefore is in no sense merely a local government document, or it is not. Either the document is factually correct in terms of the profile that it presents of the relative prosperity or depression of the regions within Britain, or it is not. I hope that the Minister will respond specifically on that point.

The ERDF document shows clearly the need for an increasing link directly between European regional policy and the depressed regions within Britain. We have a regional policy specifically based either on an attempt to regenerate the regions or on encouraging the continuation of disparities. The big lie that the Government nave been trying to maintain is that if one relies on market forces one does not have a regional policy. Reliance on market forces is a regional policy and one aimed at increasing disparities between the regions, classes and nations within the United Kingdom. That is why we must go for a regional policy based on equality. That can never be forthcoming from this Government, and that is why no Plaid Cymru or SNP Member wishes to see the return of this Government to power.

However, we are also critical of the Labour Opposition's approach. Mild reflationary policies for the British economy as a whole cannot be effective unless their regional impact is properly quantified. It is not enough to talk of hypothetical jobs in Britain as a whole. There must be a specific approach to the regional dimension of unemployment and economic inequality through enabling nations and regions themselves to plan their economic development. That is why it is the political will expressed in our parties that can most effectively regenerate the nations of Scotland and Wales.

6.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): At the heart of the motion that inspires the debate is the United Kingdom regional development programme for 1986-90. It is not the European regional development fund's report, as the motion implies, except in the sense that it will be published in due course by the Commission. I must tell the hon. Members for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) that the report was compiled by the Government in accordance with guidelines issued by the Commission, and it comprises information drawn from statutory bodies, including local authorities. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not mislead the House in any way.

As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland explained, the document's purpose is simple. It is to provide a background for the United Kingdom's application for ERDF assistance. It is a factual account of the problems facing us, of what has been done and of what needs to be done. As for the report being secret, as stated in one newspaper headline, I cannot see how the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) could have said or implied that when he was given——

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I never said that.

Mr. Roberts: I am happy to hear the hon. Gentleman say that, because he was given a copy on 1 October by my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw). I accept his denial. It was a case of some loose newspaper reporting. I did not attribute the word "secret" to the hon. Gentleman—it was in a press report.

I am sure that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) knows that there is a copy of this report in the House of Commons and House of Lords Libraries. Many local authorities that have contributed to it have, I understand, received relevant sections of it. As for being a "devastating indictment" of our record in office, as the Leader of the Opposition said in his hyperbolical cliché, that does not fit anything in the report, nor show anything but the right hon. Gentleman's ignorance of its purpose. If we look at the amount of European aid received in the past, we can put the value of the ERDF document into perspective. Since 1979, the ERDF commitment for Wales has totalled £309 million. That is 17 per cent. of the total ERDF commitment for the United Kingdom, and 70 per cent. of it, about £225 million, has gone on infrastructure.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is not the use of such words about the prospects for reducing unemployment as "gloomy", "frighteningly bleak", "impossible" until fundamental problems are resolved a devastating indictment of the Government's policies for the unemployed? Did the Prime Minister say that the report had been compiled from local authorities? Given what the Minister has said tonight, was she not misleading the House?

Mr. Roberts: What my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said is in *Hansard* for us all to read, and she was certainly not misleading the House. I have said that the report is a factual document and I have described its purpose.

Since 1979, the annual receipts of ERDF grant have reached record levels in Wales. This has helped

[Mr. Roberts]

development in a number of key sectors in the Welsh economy, and to date Welsh ERDF commitments for 1986 total £19·8 million, a massive 25 per cent. of the United Kingdom's total for the year to date. About £57 million of Welsh projects bids are also awaiting approval in Brussels. It is the securing of that sort of money that is the purpose of the report.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said that right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches appear to have forgotten that they submitted a similar document themselves to the EC in 1978. I do not expect the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) to remember it because he was not a member of the then Labour Government, but the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who is absent from the Chamber at the moment, was a Minister at the Welsh Office at that time. That Government were supported by Plaid Cymru, and the House will recall that those were the days of the Lib-Lab pact.

Opposition Members would do well to remember their own document of 1978 before attacking the Government and the current draft of the report. The prospects outlined in the 1978 document were pretty bleak and I shall be kind and give only a flavour of it. One passage read:

"The structural weaknesses in local economies, arising mainly from their reliance on a narrow industrial base, can only be remedied over a long period of time."

When referring specifically to Wales, it stated:

"Unemployment has remained persistently high, averaging about 1½ times that of the United Kingdom as a whole. Activity rates are low, particularly for women".

This picture of the north-east of Wales—the area of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside—is as gloomy as any of his speeches. It is as follows:

"Unemployment over recent years has increased substantially".

The Labour Government's report went on to talk of

"uncertainty about the future of the area with its dependence on a narrow manufacturing base centred on the steel, textile and aircraft industries."

That was described by my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). Have Opposition Members forgotten that report and all its gloomy forecasts? What a contrast there is between what the 1978 document said about the north-east of Wales and what is said in our document in 1986. Our report states:

"Job gains at new manufacturing plants since 1981 have more than offset job opportunities lost as a result of plant closures during the same period."

I can tell Opposition Members that the 1978 report merits further study on their part.

The nub of the debate is regional policy, and the Government's tremendous achievements are recorded in the report. I must tell the hon. Members for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), for Maryhill and for Meirionydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) the facts about Wales. I hope that they find them dynamic enough for their taste. Since April 1979, some £657 million in regional development grants has been provided and £271 million in selective assistance has been offered in Wales. Since the introduction of the new regional policy regime in November 1984, 1,242 projects have been approved for regional development grants. This represents a total investment of £260 million with the prospect of 19,000 jobs. As for selective assistance, offers have been made and accepted for 166 projects, leading to a total investment of £218 million with the prospect of 6,000 new jobs and the safeguarding of 3,500 others.

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: Since 1979, we have spent over £700 million on road construction in Wales—this issue was raised by the hon. Member for Caernarfon—to provide 22 miles of motorway and 84 miles of trunk roads. I must answer what has been said in the debate in these final 10 minutes.

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: No. The hon. Gentleman should be interested in this part of my speech because he made great play of how much money was or was not spent on roads in Wales. I am answering a point that he made in his speech. I can tell him that 40 miles of trunk road are currently under improvement at an estimated cost of £270 million.

Since May 1979, the Welsh Development Agency has spent £296 million creating over 6 million sq ft of factory space and £77 million on reclaiming 7,700 acres of derelict land. Since 1979, Mid-Wales Development has spent £45 million on factories and on other services to bring new jobs to central Wales. Since 1979, we have approved £122 million in urban programme schemes, helping to safeguard and create about 20,000 jobs. Since April 1982, nearly £24 million in urban development grant has brought about a total investment of £139 million, safeguarding 4,300 permanent jobs and creating 2,200 others during construction.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister give way now?

Mr. Roberts: Since 1979 the Wales tourist board has helped create 2,600 jobs with £17 million in assistance towards 600 projects, bringing forward about £65 million in total investment. In the present year, the Welsh water authority—the authority was mentioned by the hon. Member for Caernarfon—is planning to spend about £60 million in improving water and sewerage services. In two years' time this will rise to £73 million. Before the end of 1987, we hope to start construction on 10 further major road schemes, providing a further 25 miles of new roads at an estimated cost of £115 million.

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: I have not finished yet. Between January 1988 and December 1990 we are planning to make a start on a further 26 schemes that will provide 60 miles of trunk road and motorway improvements at a cost of nearly £280 million. It is no wonder that Wales is so attractive to foreign investors. It is no wonder that since November 1984 WINvest has received 83 overseas projects promising a total of over 4,200 new jobs and safeguarding 2,800 others.

Social investment, too, has been on a massive scale. Again, this was mentioned by the hon. Member for Caernarfon. Since 1979, £367 million has been spent on hospital and community health capital projects. Capital spending on housing is 30 per cent. up on last year. Private sector housing starts are at their highest point since 1979. We are working on major new partnership initiatives to bring forward housing schemes involving local authorities, housing associations and the private sector. We are looking to the valleys initiative, coupled with extensive

road projects, to open up the valley areas to trigger off a series of co-ordinated activities by the people who live there.

Mr. Wilson *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 163, Noes 247.

Division No. 296] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon Wilson and
Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael

Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the efforts and achievements of Her Majesty's Government in stimulating the economies of Scotland and Wales; welcomes the submission to the European Commission of the United Kingdom Regional Development Programme for 1986-90 as the basis for maximising European Regional Development Fund assistance to the United Kingdom; notes the references in that document to the significant steps being taken by the Government to replace jobs lost in the assisted areas and to strengthen the infrastructure of such areas; and endorses the Government's determination to tackle the problems of all parts of the United Kingdom by means of sustained and effective economic and regional policies.

Immigration

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the Front Bench spokesmen, I should announce that no fewer than 30 right hon. and hon. Members have indicated their wish to take part in this important debate. I have no control over the length of speeches, but it would be helpful to all concerned if they could be as brief as possible.

7.15 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move,

That the Statement of Change in Immigration Rules (Cmnd. 9914), which was laid before this House on 8th October, be disapproved.

Mr. Speaker: With the agreement of the House we shall also discuss the following:

That the Statement of Change in Immigration Rules (House of Commons Paper No. 584), which was laid before this House on 21st October, be disapproved.

Mr. Kaufman: On 15 October a visa requirement came into force for those travelling to this country from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Although the Government had been contemplating such a change in immigration rules for several weeks, inadequate preparation had been made for implementing it. In posts overseas, where it was announced that 39 additional entry clearance officers were to be sent, only two were in place on that date in Pakistan and none in the other two countries.

Here in Britain preparations were even more unsatisfactory. It was fully anticipated by the Home Office that advance knowledge of the introduction of visas would produce a rush of people anxious not to become enmeshed in the bureaucracy of the new system. The Home Secretary has sought to imply that the visa date produced a rush of people ineligible to come as visitors but anxious to sneak in as subterfuge settlers. However, a large number of those who arrived two weeks ago were eventually admitted as bona fide visitors. Of those who were returned to their port of origin, it is impossible to know how many were wrongly returned since chaos at Heathrow prevented relatives from securing proper consideration of the merits of decisions in many cases. There is evidence from several of my hon. Friends to show that some of those who arrived were wrongly removed despite a stop having been put on their removal under current arrangements. In common decency, the Home Secretary should arrange to have the victims of the breakdown of his own administrative arrangements returned here at public expense. His administrative arrangements did undoubtedly break down.

Mr. Dellanos, assistant chief inspector at Heathrow, not only told me that a rush was anticipated but admitted that the contingency plans were indequate. The result was that relatives who had come to meet their visitors were compelled to wait for days without information. Some had to stay at hotels and others, without the means to do that, slept night after night in their cars. Others travelled home and returned to Heathrow day after day. All of those people, in addition to their anxiety and uncertainty, were put to considerable financial expense through no fault of their own. That often included a substantial loss of earnings which they could ill afford. The Home Secretary was directly responsible for those financial penalties on innocent citizens and I believe that in common decency he should compensate them for what they have lost.

The position of those who arrived seeking entry as visitors was even worse. Some, it is true, were accommodated at expensive hotels. It is deplorable that, in a Government who pride themselves on financial control, the Minister of State has been unable to tell me how much that all cost the taxpayer. Is he truly unable to reveal the cost, or is he simply unwilling to disclose the financial consequences of his own incompetence? Others were made to wait in a series of ante-chambers until the hard-pressed immigration staff could interview them. Some were held in large numbers in the gate rooms, which is where passengers usually await the call for departure. I saw them there and the conditions were grossly overcrowded. Some had to sleep on the floor. Some, when wanting to go to the lavatory, were sent in batches of 10 under escort as if they were prisoners.

At night many were held in a detention centre. Others were held in a youth custody centre. One group was sent as far afield as Canterbury prison. All of these people sent to penal institutions, whether admitted to this country or sent home, were citizens of friendly countries innocent of any crime. They were not even charged with any crime. The treatment of these people was shameful. We all know that they would not have been treated like that if their skins had been white.

Why did the Government change the policy? The decision to impose a visa requirement, which was responsible for these disgraceful scenes, will impose hardship on future visitors and their relatives—relatives settled in this country, often citizens of this country and, in every case but one, citizens of the Commonwealth which the Tory party claims so much to champion. The Home Secretary has advanced a collection of statistics to justify his decision. Most of the statistics do not stand up to a moment's examination. He cites the increasing numbers of refusals of admission as a justification for action. He cites a rise from 18,000 in 1985 to 22,000 in the year ended June 1986. Despite that increase—and the rise is offered on a very dubious statistical basis—the increase of 4,000 does not seem large against the figure of 8·5 million arrivals in Britain from non-EEC countries during 1985.

The statistical comparison is invalid because the 22,000 figure claiming to show an intolerable increase on the 18,000 figure actually includes part of the 18,000 upon which it is claimed to be an increase. That is an example of the statistical juggling in which the Home Secretary is involved. However, even if we accept these rigged figures from the Home Secretary, the rise in refusals of visitors from the five countries on which visas are now imposed is fewer than 3,000 in a 12-month period.

Last year the number of those coming to this country from the five countries as a proportion of the 8 million arrivals—those arriving from non-EEC countries—was 0·07 per cent., fewer than one in every 1,300 arrivals. In human terms of course the impact of refusals was considerable but in statistical terms it was scarcely noticeable. Yet that is the Home Secretary's evidence in support of his action. It was noticeable that there was a disproportion between refusals of people coming from those five countries and people from other countries. The figures which I have just obtained today show that in the year ended May 1986 a Bangladeshi had one chance in 20 of being refused entry to this country. For a Canadian the chance of being refused entry was one in 7,857. A Bangladeshi was 393 times more likely than a Canadian to be refused admission.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No, I will not give way because many hon. Members wish to speak.

Last Tuesday I alluded to such comparisons. With reference to people coming from countries whose inhabitants have predominantly white skins, a Conservative Member intervened from a sedentary position and called out, "They go home". The question is, do they go home any more than those people from the five countries to which I have referred?

Last Tuesday the Home Secretary said in another batch of rigged and selective statistics that the number of absconders, as he called them, in 1985 was 255 and that in the year ended June 1986 that figure had risen to 430. He did not say whether these so-called absconders were all from countries from which visitors now need visas. However, let us accept that that is what he meant. Let us consider the figures as if they referred only to nationals of the five countries.

It is indubitable that the alleged absconders amounted last year to 0.003 per cent. of the 8·5 million non-EEC arrivals in this country. That is one in every 33,333. If we consider arrivals at Heathrow alone, the figure was 0·005 per cent., one in more than 19,000. I would not have said that those proportions were a great menace to the stability of the state or of our society. However, it may be claimed that, tiny though the figures may be, they may be much higher than for those of white or white-dominated countries and therefore they are statistically significant.

In a parliamentary question last week my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) asked for information about over-stayers. Over-stayers are not precisely the same as absconders, the definitions are different and are obtained in different ways, but nevertheless they are roughly comparable. My hon. Friend wanted information on over-stayers from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. She asked for the numbers of people from those countries not known to have returned to their country of origin within the time limit specified within their original admission. The Minister of State provided this illuminating reply:

"Recordings of landings and embarkations from these, as from other nationalities, is selective."

Yes, it is selective. The Minister continued:

"information is not available as to numbers or proportions within these totals not known to have left at the end of their permitted stay."

We have absolutely no idea of the number of over-stayers from these countries. The numbers may be small or substantial. We simply do not know. The Minister of State in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock made a confident assertion:

"We have no reason to believe that the overwhelming majority of visitors to this country do not leave at the end of their stay."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. *801*.]

He has no justification, rationality, information or evidence for that assertion. He simply offers it as a hunch about people from those white countries. However, from the Home Secretary's statistics about absconders, we have no reason to believe that the overwhelming majority of visitors from the five countries on which visas are being imposed do not leave at the end of their stay. From the statistics of absconders which the Home Secretary presented to the House, if we accept them for the purposes of this argument, we see that of visitors to this country from those five countries, 99·95 per cent. return home. I would have thought that 99·95 per cent. was an overwhelming majority. However, it does not seem to be enough for the Government. The 400 or so people whom the Government say are absconders unfortunately, for them, have black faces. Yet we do not know how accurate those tiny figures of absconders are.

The way in which those figures are compiled was set out for me in a parliamentary answer from the Minister of State. That explanation gives no confidence in their reliability. The figures are an aggregate of the different kinds of guesswork from which the Government provide a total which they try to use as evidence of malfeasance of people coming here and not returning. Can we trust the figures? Are they accurate, or botched together to bolster a poor and partisan case?

Mr. Marlow: They are massively underestimated.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) had better accuse his hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. I have never known the Minister to massively under-estimate anything that would cause discredit to the black communities in this country.

Even if the figures are accurate, are they sufficient to justify creating a bureaucracy requiring the screening of 500,000 applicants, 99·95 per cent. of whom come here and go home voluntarily at great delay and great expense?

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I will give way. However, I hope that hon. Members will accept that I cannot give way again because of the many hon. Members who wish to speak.

Mr. Mikardo: I would not have intervened but for the fact that the point is highly germane to what my right hon. Friend is saying. Among the statistics on absconders is a recent case that I had — there may well be others. A chap was called an absconder because he did not turn up for his aeroplane—he had left voluntarily a week earlier and notified the immigration authorities that he was doing so.

Mr. Kaufman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is an excellent example of how the Government rig unsubstantiated figures to prove a point.

The Minister of State said that the recording of statistics is selective. It is the Government's entire case, not just statistics, which is selective. A Home Office circular frankly stated last year:

"It is impossible to draw any conclusions from the figures about the extent of overstaying by a particular nationality in relation to any other."

The Home Secretary is doing what his Department says should not be done. He is invalidly drawing conclusions which his Department says is impossible. We have to ask whether he is doing that to bolster a poor case and whether it is an attempt to justify the unjustifiable. Why has the visa policy been adopted? The answer may lie in the manoeuverings of the Immigration Service Union, an organisation which broke away from the Civil and Public Servants Association five years ago, has not been accepted by the Trades Union Congress for affiliation, was banned from membership of the Council of Civil Service Unions and the spokesmen and spokeswomen of which have, during the past few days in particular, but for some time

also, been given to making outspoken statements that are often politically controversial and are sometimes racially prejudicial.

Last Tuesday, the Home Secretary offered the House statistics detailing the increase in the number of refusals of nationals from the five affected countries. He asserted that, despite the increase, there had been

"no change . . .in the practice of immigration officers."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. 948.]

We have no more than the Home Secretary's word for that. His claim is unsupported by any confirmed evidence. We know that last year the Immigration Service Union met the Minister of State and thrust at him a series of complaints and allegations about the system then in operation. We know too that it was after that that the drastic rise in refusals by those same immigration officers began. We know that the announcement of the introduction of visas was made on 1 September—only 24 hours before the ISU was due to ballot on industrial action in support of demands. We also know that, even after the visa announcement, an ISU spokesman asserted that the policy change would not be enough to prevent strike action unless it was accomplished by a ban on intervention by hon. Members.

According to *The Independent*, the union was even more precise and threatening. A recent report in that newspaper said:

"The union reminded Mr. Waddington of its mandate for industrial action if the strain on their members was not lifted. It said this could only be achieved by an end to MPs' representations."

The Home Secretary abjectly surrendered to that blackmail. It is a surrender by the man who, one month ago, in a most notable speech, denounced the machinations of pressure groups. He described them as serpents and said:

"Members of Parliament and Ministers both in my view need to shake themselves free to some extent from the embrace of pressure groups and interest groups."

The pressure group of the ISU has dictated the Home Secretary's policy on this issue.

The Home Secretary caved in to the ISU and introduced a visa regime. Last week, he first leaked and then announced a proposed change in the handling of hon. Members' representations—what has become known as the stop system. Last week, the proposed change to the guidelines was published. The relevant amended paragraph is so vague as to be meaningless. The key sentence in the new version of paragraph 3 reads as follows:

"If the passenger was refused entry because he did not have the required entry clearance under the immigration rules, action to remove him will not automatically be deferred."

What on earth does that mean? Hon. Members need to understand it and have it explained because they will have to act in accordance with it unless it is amended and made more comprehensible.

That a removal will not automatically be deferred seems to indicate that a removal will be deferred in certain circumstances. What are those circumstances? How are we to be sure? We need to be sure because the interests of our constituents depend on these conditions being specified, and we, as representatives of our constituents, have a right to know.

I shall give the Home Secretary some examples to which I should like him to respond specifically. What about a family emergency? What about somebody in one of the affected countries who hears that his or her parent is dying, at the beginning of the weekend when the embassy or high commission is not open? If such a person arrives here, will he or she be admitted? Will such a person's relatives have a right to ask their Member of Parliament to put a stop on removal if the passenger is not admitted? The Home Secretary might say that such a person will be refused admission and have to rely on his or her right of appeal, but, by the time the appeal is heard, the parent will be dead. Is that what the Home Secretary wants?

It is the same for somebody who arrives for a funeral. Unless a stop is permitted, the funeral will be held and the grieving relative will be forced to miss it.

What about those who seek asylum from an authoritarian regime? Are they to be summarily removed to a country where they may be executed, tortured or imprisoned, without a Member of Parliament having the right to intervene? What about the category of would-be visitors whose predicament was raised last week by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser)? I refer to students who come here to arrange their admission to colleges and who may encounter difficulties. Are they to be denied their educational opportunities because of lack of access to a Member of Parliament?

What about those who arrive with visas and whose visas are queried or challenged? Mr. Dellanos, the assistant chief inspector at terminal 3, told me that a visa does not guarantee admission to the country. The Home Secretary was forced to admit that during our exchanges in the House last Tuesday. We need to know whether a person whose visa is challenged will be able to obtain help from a Member of Parliament without being returned in the interim.

What about visitors who are already in the country? Many are already here having been admitted after obtaining temporary admission. Will Members of Parliament still be able to secure a stop on their removal by making the secondary representations that are referred to in the existing guidelines? Many who are here have been admitted not on temporary admission but for periods as visitors without visas, and many will in future be admitted for visits with visas. Will a Member of Parliament have the right to stop their departure or removal while an application is made for an extension of the visit that is perfectly permissible within the law?

What about returning residents who have been away within the permitted period? Will their Member of Parliament be entitled to secure a stop on their removal if they encounter difficulty on arrival in Britain? The Home Secretary says that they should obtain an exemption stamp to avoid problems, but an exemption stamp is not a legal requirement. Are people to be penalised for not abiding by the Home Secretary's advice, as distinct from a legal requirement?

What if people travel, acting on the misplaced assumption that they are free citizens and do not know that they need an exemption stamp? Will they be bundled out of the country without their Member of Parliament having the right and power to help?

The Home Secretary has not begun to think through these problems. He should show some humanity by retaining the stop rights of Members of Parliament in these and other cases, with which we shall acquaint him.

The new system and the removal of essential safeguards are riddled with potentiality for inefficiency, unfairness and injustice. We do not know how the appeal system, by

[Mr. Kaufman]

which the Home Secretary sets such store, will work. We do not know how long the process will take. I cannot say that I have very great confidence in either the speed or the reliability of the system, because today I received a reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office whom I had asked about the appeals procedure. He said:

". . . an entry clearance officer, in consultation at larger posts with his senior officer, reconsiders his decision in the light of the grounds of appeal put forward."

All of us will have great confidence in that procedure. The reply continues:

"If the entry clearance officer maintains his decision, he prepares an explanatory statement which is forwarded to the independent appellate authorities in this country."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. *1006*.]

So there will be a procedure for people who simply want to come here on a short visit and who are refused visas for reasons that will take months to resolve. [HON. MEMBERS: "It will probably take years."] I shall not quarrel with my hon. Friends about that.

These exceptionally expensive arrangements can be compared with alternative uses to which the money committed to this purpose could be put to ease problems at the ports of entry. Tonight we are scrutinising a policy change that is based upon the assumed need to screen 500,000 people a year — if we extend to the Home Secretary the unnecessary courtesy of accepting his selective statistics — with the aim of catching 400 who might not return home if they are admitted. Is it worth it financially?

The Government are erecting a cumbersome bureaucracy. Last week the Home Secretary said that there is no reason why an Indian should not need a visa to come here if he, the Home Secretary, needs a visa to go to India. Other considerations apart, however, if the Home Secretary is seeking parity of treatment, why is it that an Indian will have to apply for his or her visa at least one month in advance while anyone in Britain—either the Home Secretary or anybody else—can obtain a visa for India in 48 hours? It is an expensive bureaucracy. The Minister of State told my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) that it costs about £10,000 to maintain an immigration officer. We know also from another answer to my hon. and learned Friend that it costs £126,000 to maintain an entry clearance officer in a post abroad.

The Home Secretary claimed—some regard it as an extravagant claim — that 300 additional immigration officers are required at Heathrow significantly to improve conditions there. That may or may not be true. Even if it is true, the Earl of Caithness, who spoke for the Home Office last week in the House of Lords, admitted to the House of Lords that for the £14 million that the additional 39 entry clearance officers will cost abroad, we in Britain could have an additional 700 immigration officers. If we had 700 additional immigration officers, all the problems that have been complained about would vanish overnight. If the Home Secretary claims that additional costs will be involved in sustaining that extra number of immigration officers, let us be clear that the Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office told my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) in another parliamentary answer that for four of the five countries, in addition to the annual costs, start-up costs alone will amount to another £6·3 million. The extravagance of this new system will be huge.

Last year, the total cost to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office budget for entry clearance worldwide was £19 million. Of the £19 million, the amount allocated to dealing with visitors was £12 million. Therefore, for these five countries the Government, to deal with a problem of their own creation, are more than doubling the amount that they are spending on clearance for visitors to this country.

The work will seriously distort the work of the missions that are affected. Last December, when the Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration of the Home Affairs Select Committee was considering the possibility of visas for visitors, an assistant under-secretary at the Foreign Office, Mr. N. J. Barrington, spoke against the introduction of visas for visitors and asked

"whether it is worth setting up a system where you will be imposing a bureaucratic system on 90 per cent. of the people who do not need to have any pieces of paper or any trouble at the moment."

However, the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister have overruled the Foreign Secretary and gone ahead with this costly, unnecessary and discriminatory sytem. They have done it partly to meet the demands of the Immigration Service Union. They have also done it—this is to the particular discredit of the Home Secretary who likes to pose as a liberal-minded man — because they have deliberately decided to play the race card during the approaching general election. As the Conservative party becomes increasingly discredited on issue after issue —unemployment, health, social security, education and the record crime wave—it turns to its murky, perennial fall-back position and seeks to garner the racialist vote.

Despite the Home Secretary's bleatings about parity with India, these immigration rule changes are racially discriminatory. In a most revealing Freudian slip, a couple of weeks ago the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), said that the new visa régime was not racialist because it did not include the West Indies. We do not prove our anti-racialist credentials by boasting that a measure that affects only black countries is not racialist because it does not affect even more black countries. We prove our fairness by showing that our action does not affect black countries alone. But the Home Secretary cannot do that. He cannot claim, either, consistency in reciprocity.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No. I am about to turn to the hon. Gentleman's right hon. and hon. Friends. The Home Secretary needs a visa to go to India. An Indian now needs a visa to come here. The Home Secretary also needs a visa to go to South Africa, but a white South African does not need a visa to come to this country.

This measure is specifically aimed at black people alone. Furthermore, its authors are seeking to imply that these measures are not simply against visitors but are designed to control primary immigration. They say that by our opposition on these Benches to the changes we are somehow, as they put it and as their lackey newspapers put it, wanting to open what they call the floodgates of immigration. The *Financial Times* put it best in a leading article. It said:

"The Government's decision . . . needlessly confuses the subject of tourist entry with the quite separate subject of immigration."

It went on to say:

"It adds overtones of racial discrimination."

Last week the Home Secretary made a racially prejudicial comment. He expressed surprise at the number of young men who all happened to choose the third week of October to come and see the Tower of London. Does the Home Secretary realise that one can be a bona fide tourist or visitor to Britain without going sightseeing in London? People from the Indian subcontinent have a tremendous feeling for family, of the kind that I thought the Government admired. They save fares from very low incomes. They are sent tickets by relatives here so that they can make family visits to see parents, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces. Why does the Home Secretary dismiss that commendable and warm-hearted feeling with his own aloof brand of patrician scorn?

In an even more loaded remark, the Home Secretary alleged that

"the right hon. Gentleman"—

he was referring to me—

"and his colleagues want to tear a hole in immigration control so wide as to make it meaningless."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. 951.]

What a squalid fabrication, deliberately designed to stir up nasty racialism.

Let me make it clear, as I have done several times in many debates in the House and in other forums, that a Labour Government will maintain firm immigration control which will be non-racialist and non-sexist. My hon. Friends and I are opposing racially discriminatory controls on would-be visitors to this country. Far from wishing to tear a hole in immigration control, we wish to make visitor control more effective by increasing the number of immigration officers here in Britain, at a fraction of the cost of the Government's new scheme. We also want to protect the constitutional rights of Members of Parliament to assist their constituents effectively.

Indeed, it is the Government who will make immigration control ineffective. The whereabouts of those who have been admitted, even on temporary admission, after hon. Members' stop procedures, are known to the authorities. Almost all of those people returned without quibble. If the Government are as suspicious of visitors from the Indian subcontinent as they claim, they ought to know that those who obtain a visitors' visa would, if they wished, be able to regard it as a licence to abscond. However, they will not do so because that is not what they want to do. Even according to the Home Secretary's loaded statistics, 99·95 per cent. of them do not do that. Those visitors want to pay visits there and then to return home, just like white tourists from whom the Home Secretary separates them in his own private apartheid policy.

Despite the Home Secretary's cynical resort to electoral racialism, I tell him here and now that we shall not be deflected from our beliefs. We shall go on fighting for the civil rights and the human rights of the people of all ethnic origins whom we are proud to represent.

7.53 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I make no complaint about the comments of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), either about myself or my colleagues, because he had a rough time the other day and it is natural that he should try to recover from that as best he can. However, it is a pity that he should attack those who administer immigration control on our behalf. It does not matter what union they belong to. Indeed, they belong to different unions. They do a difficult job, and they do it well.

Today the right hon. Gentleman argued, without giving any proof—and the onus of proof is upon him—that immigration officers have changed their methods and standards of operation in the past few months, without any change in the immigration rules by which they are bound. It is unfortunate that he should make that charge without any substantiation.

The changes which we have made, and which the right hon. Gentleman has attacked, are, I believe, overwhelmingly supported in the country. The changes have been made, not because of pressure put on the Government by any union, but because of the pressure on Heathrow airport in particular. This pressure has been building up for some time. Any effective system of immigration control must screen visitors. The question is not whether it should be done—we are not introducing any new principle—but whether it should be done here or overseas.

Before answering the right hon. Gentleman's main argument, I should like to give the House the latest information. Contrary to many predictions, the new system is working smoothly. The airlines of all four countries are co-operating with it. Hardly any passengers requiring visas have arrived without them on direct flights. Of those who did arrive on 14 October, there are still some 80, as the right hon. Gentleman said, in detention, mostly Bangladeshis. All have been detained because a right hon. or hon. Member has intervened on their behalf—we are still honouring the system which we propose to change. Under its guidelines, right hon. and hon. Members have, as they all know, 12 working days from the date of their intervention to make representations. We are awaiting these. Much interviewing remains to be done of those given temporary admission after their arrival in the crowded days earlier in October. Since 16 October, 382 people have been removed to the four countries, either from Heathrow or Gatwick.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary tells me that the introduction of the regime overseas is so far working smoothly. All personal applicants are seen, most of them are issued with their visas the same day and many postal applications are processed on the day of receipt. A fair verdict on the scheme to date is "So far, so good".

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way once, but the hon. Lady will have noticed with care the practice of her right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton in this respect.

Ms. Short: I wish to ask the Home Secretary a simple, factual question. If everything is working well, can he say how many have applied, how many have been processed and how many have been refused? Then we shall be able to judge.

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Lady puts those questions when the scheme has been in operation for a longer time, she will get the answers. All I am saying, and I know that the hon.

[Mr. Hurd]

Lady will be pleased to hear it, is that whether one is talking about Heathrow or about posts in the subcontinent, the evidence to date, which she has not contradicted, is that the new scheme is working smoothly —a great deal more smoothly than the old one.

Without going back over our exchanges last week, I should like to correct one point which is continually raised and which the right hon. Member for Gorton put at the centre of his arguments today. Although he was invited to do so, the right hon. Gentleman did not answer the question whether a future Labour Government would remove the visa scheme.

Mr. Kaufman: Yes.

Mr. Hurd: I am delighted to hear that, because it will confirm in many people's minds the thought that the Labour party is not serious in wishing to have effective immigration control. The right hon. Gentleman argued that the problem, on the scale that he described, could have been dealt with by employing more people at Heathrow and the ports. I believe that people who say that are either not putting the case genuinely or have not studied the problem.

The problem, as I tried to show last week, is one of surges—periods of relative calm and then large numbers coming in. It is nonsense to suppose that the latest surge was the only one. There was a surge in the spring of 1985, particularly of people from Sri Lanka. There was a surge in the summer of 1984, partucularly of people from Bangladesh. In the early part of this year there was a sharp increase in refusals from the five countries now affected, and in the summer of 1986 there was a surge in the inflow, in particular, from West Africa.

Faced with that situation, however many immigration officers we were to employ, however many interpreters we were to recruit, however many new detention centres we were to build around Heathrow — however great the investment and recruitment—the old system was likely occasionally to be overwhelmed with great delays and inconvenience to all, not least bona fide visitors, their sponsors and relatives.

The right hon. Gentleman made great play with his percentages. He said that the mischief was statistically not noticeable. It was very noticeable at Heathrow, and not only to members of the ISU. The fact is that periodically the system came under intense strain so that the case gradually built up for saying that control should be practised overseas rather than at Heathrow to the great inconvenience, and worse, of large numbers of people.

An interesting point that has occurred to me during the past few days is that exactly the same problem confronted the Government in 1969 with regard to those coming in for settlement. I have looked at the statement made by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who then held my position, and I was struck by the arguments and phrases that he used at that time in making entry clearance compulsory for settlement overseas. He used exactly the same arguments. For example, on 1 May he said:

"We have decided that it would be more humane and lead to improved efficiency if those with claims . . . have their cases scrutinised and decided before they set out on their journey."—[*Official Report*, 1 May 1969; Vol. 782, c. 1631.]

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: Of course, that is settlement, but the point is the same. What we have been seeing since 1962 is a series of administrative adjustments designed to ensure that our traditional on-entry port controls can continue with all their advantages for most travellers, but be supported by effective pre-entry controls where merited—in 1969 on settlement cases, and in 1986 on visas.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: That seems to us to be a much wiser approach than to let our on-entry controls crumble to the point where we shall be forced to the much more difficult and unattractive option of relying more heavily on after-entry controls.

I shall give way to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) because he has a standing and a particular interest in the matter. I do not intend to give way again.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to the Home Secretary. Does he recognise the important distinction between permanent settlement and those coming for a visit? Rightly or wrongly in 1969, in the debate on the matter to which he referred, I supported the entry clearance system, but I was not to know that within a few years we would reach a position where people could wait literally years before applying and before their case was decided upon. That is why many of us fear that, as a result of the system that he is introducing, there will be much more delay than he is now telling us.

Mr. Hurd: Of course there is a difference between visitors and would-be settlers. In each case there is a procedure, and in 1969 the Labour Government decided that the procedure in respect of settlement, precisely because of the pressures building up, should be conducted overseas, and we have taken an identical decision in respect of visitors.

The Opposition clearly want the control, in one way or another, to be relaxed and a higher proportion—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—of those claiming to be visitors to be admitted. The whole thrust of the argument that we have heard month after month from the Labour Benches has been precisely that. What is the complaint against the immigration officers unless it is argued that they should be letting in more people?

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No, I shall not give way.

Let me illustrate the sort of trouble that existed under the old system. I have given the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) notice that I would mention this. The sort of trouble that could arise under the old system is well illustrated by the case of a group of 16 young Bangladeshi entertainers who arrived here in October 1985. They sought admission for two months to undertake a number of cultural engagements. The Immigration Service did not believe their story, but the right hon. Gentleman, who has always handled such matters with great responsibility in my experience, made strong representations. In the light of those I overturned a refusal of the immigration officers and let that group in for two months. Of the 16, only nine have gone back to Bangladesh, one has applied to stay on as a student and the other six have vanished without trace.

In all, we have information about 11 groups claiming to be Bangladeshi entertainers, involving 201 performers. Of the 138 who were granted leave to enter, 26 have

embarked, nine applied for extensions and 103 have disappeared. Of the 42 allowed in under temporary admission, 36 have absconded. That is the measure of the problem under the old system, and that is the farce that we have brought to an end.

Let me respond to some of the practical points which the right hon. Member for Gorton put to me. Those that I do not reply to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will pick up.

Possession of a visa means that people can travel confident of obtaining admission. Under paragraph 13 of the immigration rules a visa holder—or a holder of any type of entry clearance — may be refused admission only in closely defined and limited circumstances—for example, if the visa was obtained by fraud, or if there had been some material change in the holder's circumstances after issue which effectively invalidated the basis of issue.

Under paragraph 14, immigration officers are told that examination of visa holders should not be carried further than is necessary for determining whether any of those kinds of exceptions apply. In addition—this is a crucial point—where a visa holder is nevertheless refused admission, he has, under section 13(3) of the Immigration Act 1971, a statutory right to remain in this country to exercise his right of appeal. No other passengers have that right, and it was deliberately intended to emphasise the special position of visa holders.

Therefore, anyone who is refused a visa overseas has the right of appeal overseas. Anyone who is given a visa, but is nevertheless refused entry in the circumstances that I have talked about, has the right of appeal here. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] I have just answered that question. It should be remembered that we have not insisted that people already legitimately here for reasonable periods need invariably obtain visas. There are exemptions for those settled here who return after less than two years away, and for those here for a limited but long-term purpose, such as work or study, who make a trip abroad.

This is the first time that there are such exemptions. There is no operational need to require visas in such cases and we hope that the exemptions will avoid unnecessary inconvenience. While people in these categories are exempt without any need for action on their part, we have introduced, as has been said, arrangements to endorse their passports confirming the exemption if they wish to travel and are concerned that airlines or other Governments may not appreciate the visa exemption. This is an attempt to be helpful. If the right hon. Member for Gorton thinks that we would be better off without that concession, we can consider that, but that is not what he is saying. If he has practical points about the effectiveness of the exemption stamps, let us look at them.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Home Secretary give way on that point?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Member for Gorton did not give way and he gave as his reason the perfectly valid point that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak. The same applies to me and I have given way, I think, three times more than the right hon. Gentleman.

As a result of those arrangements and the steps that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has taken from abroad, bona fide travellers should not suffer. Indeed, their admission should be made easier. Those who would be disadvantaged by the new visa requirements are those who are trying to take advantage of the form of our control by turning up at the ports hoping to slip through and establish a foothold.

The right hon. Member for Gorton asked about the guidelines for the handling of representations by hon. Members. The great majority of such representations have been made on behalf of passengers from the five countries who have sought admission as visitors but whom the immigration officer has judged—and that is the crucial word—do not meet the requirements of the rules. Under the present system, an hon. Member may ask for a passenger's removal to be delayed while a Minister considers the case. Such requests for delay have always been conceded.

An hon. Member has the right to make representations to any Minister. That cannot be diminished in any way. The power to stop removal is a different matter. This is a unique privilege, with no parallel in any other field. I am aware of no other instance where an hon. Member may, without any argument either on the facts or merits of the case, simply stay the execution of powers accorded by law.

Under the new system, it would not be right to stop removal automatically if a passenger had been refused entry because he had arrived without a visa or other form of entry clearance, which is a clear requirement under the rules. In that case, the immigration officer would no longer be making a judgment on whether a passenger was what he claimed to be, but would be applying an objective test as to whether the foreign national had a visa. It is fundamental to the scheme that the decision whether an individual qualifies for admission is made overseas. If a person arrives without having obtained a visa, he should return to his country of origin to make his case.

An automatic stop on removal could become a device to enable those who have not established that they are qualified for admission to remain in Britain. Airline staff and travel operators would consider themselves to be under no effective requirement to ensure that their passengers were properly documented. To retain an automatic stop on the removal of passengers would frustrate the visa system. That is not to say that there will be no exceptions. Passengers, airlines and hon. Members should not believe that passengers who are refused entry because they do not have a visa or entry clearance will normally be allowed to stay simply because an hon. Member is prepared to express an interest in the case, but there may be exceptional cases where a passenger could not reasonably obtain a visa before travelling, and compelling reasons why he should be admitted to Britain without one.

As I have said, an immigration officer can already exercise discretion and admit the passenger. If that does not happen, but there is clear and compelling evidence to justify the exercise of discretion, it is open to an hon. Member to argue that representations on the passenger's behalf should be considered before his removal. The right hon. Member for Gorton said that he wishes to discuss how that system might work in practice, and arrangements for that are in train.

I shall answer two of the specific matters that the right hon. Gentleman put to me. As I said last week, there is no change in the arrangements or obligations for asylum.

[Mr. Hurd]

Rule 24 of the immigration rules covers the case which the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) raised and which was echoed by the right hon. Gentleman. I refer to students who do not have a university place here but who are coming for interviews in the hope of obtaining a place. I hope that, if the right hon. Gentleman reconsiders the rule, he will discover that that case is provided for.

I must emphasise that we shall be prepared to delay removal only in the most exceptional of cases where the hon. Member presents the relevant facts at the time any representations are made. The House will not expect me to lay down particular circumstances in advance. Posts abroad will have arrangements to deal with urgent applications and they should be capable of accommodating such cases. It follows that passengers who arrive here without the required entry clearance must normally expect to be removed without delay. Of course, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and I must listen carefully to what hon. Members say on this subject — that is part of the debate's purpose — and we must adjust our practice in the light of experience, but we should not reinstate under the new procedure the system of stops which had some justification under the old system.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on the subject of an hon. Member's obligations?

Mr. Hurd: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Lady will have an opportunity to intervene later.

Opposition Members claim that they do not believe in unrestricted immigration. The right hon. Member for Gorton has a cheek to say that it is we who have played the race card. It was the Leader of the Opposition who, after a long period of relative quiescence on this front, went to India and made a thoroughly irresponsible statement. The right hon. Member for Gorton has been trying to sweep up after that statement ever since.

The extension of visa requirements, supported by the change in the guidelines for the handling of representations by hon. Members, is necessary to restore effective control. The changes will improve conditions for all passengers arriving at our ports and for all those in this country who come to greet them. There is increasing evidence that constituents realise that. The changes will help genuine visitors and hinder only those who would like to try their luck at establishing themselves in Britain when they have no claim to do so.

I was sorry that the right hon. Member for Gorton dragged in all this business about racism. He knows that it is nonsense. Let the right hon. Gentleman look at the list of countries from which people coming here are required to have visas, and the list of countries from which they are not. If the right hon. Gentleman can devise a racially-based principle on which those two lists are constructed, he is even more fanciful that I suppose him to be. The systems are not racist. They are constructed for operational reasons, and we have just had a strong example of why that is necessary. If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the two lists he will discover that his accusations are unjustifiable. The changes will help genuine visitors and hinder only those who claim to be visitors but who in fact are here for another purpose.

The right hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that we should distinguish, and that we should encourage the press to distinguish, between visitors, the great majority of whom are bona fide, and those who wish to settle here. If the right hon. Gentleman supposes that that distinction holds without a rigorous examination of that minority who present themselves as visitors but who wish to stay, he is entirely mistaken. Our commitment to firm and fair immigration control is illustrated and strengthened by the steps that we have taken. We have shown that we are prepared to act in that way, and I ask the House to approve that.

8.17 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): The Home Secretary's speech must rank as extraordinary by any measure. One would have thought that at the very least he would have begun with an apology to those British citizens, including many of my constituents, who spent days on end in the most appalling conditions at Heathrow airport due entirely to the Government's action, and especially that of the Home Department.

A few words of apology would not have gone amiss, but the Secretary of State said nothing at all, except to suggest that it was all our own fault and that there was a surge completely out of the blue at Heathrow airport just prior to the imposition of the visa requirement. Anyone with any experience of the matter must have known that a surge would be created, entirely by the Minister's Department. Of course there was a surge. I certainly could gauge that I would receive many more telephone calls than normal from constituents expecting me to help them with their problems, and that expectation was realised. I received dozens of telephone calls during that period from constituents asking me not just to try to obtain a stop on removals of immigrants but to try to get through to the immigration department, whose telephone number seemed to be constantly engaged, to discover whether their relatives were at Heathrow airport, whether they had been removed to some other place, or whether they were in prison. Some of my constituents allege that their visitors were put into prison uniform and even handcuffed while they were detained until they were examined and questioned, perhaps for the first time, or perhaps on a subsequent occasion following representations by me.

It is difficult for me to express not only my anger about what has happened but the anger and dismay of my constituents. It has caused tremendous difficulties for the Oldham Committee for Racial Equality. Those who represent constituents of mine originating from the Indian subcontinent are adamant that the Home Secretary's action was racist. I try to be as open-minded as possible, and to act in the interest not of party politics but of my constituents.

The Home Secretary said that he thought that there was tremendous public support for his action on visas. But he later said that he wished that the press could distinguish better between those who come to Britain as visitors and those who come to Britain as immigrants, in that they want to live here. I agree that anyone who relies on the popular press for his information must find it very difficult to understand the position. I shall disregard *The Sun*, which is not even the gutter, but rather the sewer press, and which is, unfortunately, read by quite a few people who may believe what they read. But judging by the price, there are some newspapers that think that they are above the

gutter press but whose journalists do not understand the situation or deliberately set out to confuse the public. I think, for example, of the *Sunday Express*.

Mr. Winnick: Did my hon. Friend see the article in yesterday's edition of the *Sunday Express*? In it, the hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) accuses Labour Members of operating a corrupt system because they may contact the immigration authorities if the sponsor's Member of Parliament refuses to do so. Is that not a grave charge to make against us, and is it not playing the race card to the full?

Mr. Lamond: My hon. Friend has reinforced my point. I read that article, and was appalled by it, because the hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) understands the situation. Consequently, the excuse that could be made for others who write for the *Sunday Express*, that they do not quite understand what they are talking about, cannot apply in his case.

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): When the hon. Gentleman read that article, did he not realise that it began by citing the assertion made in India by the Leader of the Opposition that a Labour Government would repeal the 1971 and 1981 Acts? Those are the twin pillars of entry control, yet he did not make any mention of what structure was to replace them. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us what that structure is to be?

Mr. Lamond: I apologise for allowing both of those interventions. I am trying to be brief, and I had not intended to refer to that article. However, it falls into the same category as the article that appeared on the front page of the *Sunday Express* on 19 October. It said:

"As Britain began yesterday to send back some of the thousands of immigrants"—

immigrants, not visitors—

"who tried to beat new tougher visa regulations the frightening costs of absorbing the new wave began to emerge."

But it cannot be that difficult to absorb visitors. Not long ago the Prime Minister went on television to beg the Americans to return here after they had been frightened off because we had allowed America to use this country as a base for an attack against Libya. Millions of American visitors are to be made welcome, but there is some problem about "absorbing" visitors from the Indian subcontinent.

The article continued:

"Many of the Asians arriving here are homeless."

What does that mean? How can they possibly have homes if they are visitors? The article goes on:

"and tend to head for the areas where they have friends or relatives".

Of course those people go to their relatives or friends. They go to areas such as Oldham where their sponsors live. That is where they are to live and be supported. Those guarantees have to be given before they are allowed into the country as visitors.

I can only imagine that Mr. Eric Flounders, leader of the Liberal-controlled council in Tower Hamlets, was misled by a Mr. Andrew Alderson's questioning, because according to the latter's disgraceful article, Mr. Flounders said:

"We are simply not able to deal with a problem of this size. No local authority could."

But no local authority is required to deal with any such problem. The article continues:

"Council leaders up and down the country have expressed concern at how people go to already overcrowded areas to stay with 'relatives'"—

the author has used quotation marks as though those people were not really relatives, when we all know that they are—

"and in months go on to the housing list."

That was a disgraceful and misleading article. If that article and the one mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) form the basis of people's ideas, it is no wonder that the Home Secretary should find it difficult to believe that people understand the problem. People are being misled. They should understand that most of those arriving at Heathrow do not want to settle here but are still held up. If we could get that point across to the public fairly and squarely, it would remove many of the problems that led the Home Secretary to introduce this measure.

The Minister's office staff are exceptionally kind in the way that they deal with hon. Members, and I thank them for that. They have great patience, even though they have been placed in some difficulty by the Government. But hon. Members should not have to take up such cases. Perhaps the Secretary of State thinks that he can fool us into believing that everything will go well now that visas have been introduced. But the fact that the great bulk of those arriving here will have visas means nothing. It will show only that those trickling through have visas. Yet I believe that great difficulties will arise. For example, Bangladesh will not have the resources to enable it to deal expeditiously with visa applications.

The problem the Home Secretary perceives is largely of his own making, particularly in the past few weeks. If the work is shifted to Bangladesh or India without any adequate resources to enable them to deal with it, there will be problems at the other end. Many people come to visit relatives here, and have a different idea of what a holiday means. For example, it would be unusual for an hon. Member to visit relatives in the United States for six months, but it would not be unusual for someone from the Indian subcontinent to want to visit his relatives for that long. Yet people are often stopped and prevented from coming in as visitors because they may wish to stay in Britain for three, four, five or six months. They are asked how long they want to stay here, but they may not have discussed that in precise terms with their relatives.

In Oldham there is one family with 300 relatives. No one should be surprised at that because people come to Britain and go to areas in which relatives have established themselves and for that reason families grow in size. When somebody comes to visit his relatives he needs some time to see them all, but he may not know exactly how long he needs. If he says that he wants to come for three months and someone else says six months, that is sufficient for the immigration officer to say that there is a conflict, a discrepancy, and that that person will not be allowed in. It may sound extraordinary, but I have heard of discrepancies of even less than that that have prevented people from being admitted to Britain as visitors and they have been sent back.

It may seem to be a good thing to have an examination of people who want to come to Britain carried out in their own country before they embark on the expense of air tickets. But they may have to travel long distances to have the interview and to get a visa. They may have difficulties in their own country just as they have difficulties at

[Mr. Lamond]

Heathrow airport. They may have no one to help them, no relative with a knowledge of Britain or, perhaps, a knowledge of the language to assist them in getting into Britain. They can have the help of such a person when the examination is carried out here.

I share the anxiety and distrust of some of my constituents who have hopes of relatives visiting them in future. I discussed this matter with such people before I came to a decision about my own attitude. By a large majority, all those with whom I discussed it are fearful and feel that their relatives, difficult though it is now, will have even greater difficulty in coming here in future. I cherish my right to assist my constituents with all their problems, problems like housing and taxation, and I certainly do not want to lose my right to assist them in bringing their relatives to visit them. I intend to vote against this legislation.

8.33 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I am sure that the House will agree with the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) in his tribute to the office of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for the patience, skill and fairness with which the personnel there tackle the enormous quantity of casework. It was the same in my time and I believe it is the same today. I have never heard any hon. Member deny that.

I listened carefully to the speech by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). One point in his generally unconvincing speech carried no conviction whatever and that was when he accused my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary of trying to play the race card. At no point in this Government's tenure of office have they tried to play the race card, as the right hon. Gentleman put it. I am proud that that should be so and that there is no evidence in this current controversy to imply that on the part of my right hon. Friend. He is simply not in that kind of business.

I know from experience the difficult problem that we have to face in operating an immigration control policy which is effective and fair. It is a remarkably difficult task and it is extremely important that we should get the policy right. We will not get very far in discussing the problem unless we are prepared to face some of the facts. One inescapable fact is that there is pressure from certain countries for continued immigration into Britain. I do not want to embark in great detail on an analysis of how I see this pressure being applied, but from countries like Bangladesh, where the pressure is heavy at the moment, 10 or 15 years or perhaps longer ago there was for the most part a perfectly legitimate influx of primary male immigrants. We are now at the secondary stage and the original migrants are settled and prosperous and want to bring in their families and their relations. Under the law they are entitled to do that to a considerable extent, but there are limits.

As the right hon. Member for Gorton said, we are today seeing a tremendous family feeling. There is perhaps a natural desire on the part of those who have arrived here and have made it good to bring in their relations. Immigration control prevents that. It is that pressure that is causing the problems faced by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. It does no good to try to duck that and hon. Members on both sides of the House who represent constituencies with substantial numbers of people from the subcontinent or whose origins are in the subcontinent know that this is the case.

How do we deal with the problem in a fair and effective way? The problem facing us in recent years is that if somebody wants to get into Britain without an entitlement to do so the best way is through a visit. As some hon. Members will remember, there was a time when we had landings at the dead of night on Dover beach or on airstrips in fields in Kent. Those things are a matter of history, and for a number of years people have recognsied that the best way of getting into Britain without authority is to come in as a visitor and then disappear. Of course, such people form only a small minority and nobody would argue otherwise, but we all know there is great difficulty in quantifying the extent to which that illegal entry is taking place. From my experience I know that this was happening a few years ago and all the signs are that it is tending to intensify. That is coupled with the phenomenon to which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary spoke —occasional surges in applications for visitors.

As the House knows, there are three ways in which we can approach the problem. One way is to have control or to have a tight examination in the country of origin. The second way is to have a rigorous appraisal of immigrants and visitors at the port of arrival. The third way is to go down the path of much more intensive internal control. I have always believed that the third of these methods is the least attractive. If we intensify internal control, we land ourselves with problems of race relations that we all wish to avoid. Of course it would be ridiculous not to have some form of internal control, but by and large it is better to have firm and effective control either at the port of entry or in the country of origin. That is the path that my right hon. Friend has gone down.

My right hon. Friend's decision to introduce a system of visas for certain countries is not in any sense discrimination. It is simply a pragmatic response to a problem which must be faced. We know that the system in operation has become grossly overburdened. In my time as Minister of State at the Home Office I received a great deal of sympathy for the enormous case load that I had to undertake. But the volume of that has increased almost beyond belief. In 1980 something like 1,000 visitor cases landed on my desk. I understand that last year some 4,500 landed on the desk of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. I am told that the rate this year is substantially higher than that. Nobody can argue that such a quantity of cases coming to the Minister for decision is a logical and rational way of tackling this problem.

Ms. Clare Short: The right hon. Gentleman is right that the number of cases coming to Ministers and Members of Parliament is heavy and has been increasing and causing a great deal of work for everyone. Given that only a minute proportion of those admitted on temporary admission and refused a normal visit do not return, is it not the case that too many people are being refused a normal visit? Should not the Minister give the appropriate instruction to immigration officers at Heathrow to allow a higher proportion of people in as normal visitors?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Lady does not understand what happens.

Ms. Short: I do.

Mr. Raison: It may be a wilful refusal to understand. When people are admitted on temporary admission they are, in a sense, under scrutiny. They must go to a stated destination, the time of their arrival must be carefully agreed and recorded and so on. It is well understood in the ethnic minority communities that people on temporary admission who do not return will cause a great deal of trouble on all sides. It is not surprising that the proportion of those on temporary admission who abscond is low. The problem of visitors settling in this country is most likely to arise from those who have full permission to visit, not from those on temporary admission.

Some people say that the system looks illogical, but that it may work in practice. From time to time it has been argued that temporary admission given on an extensive scale means that visitors may spend three or four weeks here.

Ms. Short: Two months.

Mr. Raison: Often visitors may spend a substantial period before returning to their countries, having seen their families. It is argued that, although the system is out of line with the law, it is not too bad pragmatically. That is not an acceptable view and that is not the right way to approach the problem. First, it is out of line with what the law envisages and, secondly, it imposes a tremendous strain on Ministers. Ministers are expected to work hard and the present Minister is as hard working as anybody else. But only cases of long-term, substantial importance should be referred to them.

Some immigration cases will shape the pattern of a person's life. They may concern whether an illegal entrant who has lived here for 10 years should be returned or whether relationships are false or genuine, or they may concern adoption. In those cases the Minister is faced with questions about the shape of a person's life: will that person live here or elsewhere? In such cases it is entirely proper to involve the Minister. It makes nonsense of the system automatically to refer to the Minister cases involving a short-term visit. It is equivalent to someone who loses a case in a magistrate's court asking the Home Secretary to up-end it.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): When will the right hon. Gentleman get the matter straight? We are talking not about people who wish to enter the country for permanent settlement, but about visitors. When will Ministers start to correct the terrible allegation in all newspapers that these visitors are coming to settle? The right hon. Gentleman has had ministerial experience. When people are refused entry and given temporary admission they are given a cross in their passport which blights them while the passport is in circulation and when they travel to other countries, so even people on temporary admission have a stigma attached to them.

Mr. Raison: I am talking about visitors. The position of the visitor who wants to come for a short time is different from the case of a person whose pattern of life is in question. It is absurd that the Minister should have to cope with the enormous number of cases which are not of crucial importance. If everyone is let in as a visitor, we shall be faced with the pressure of migration.

There is a way to approach the problem other than through the visa which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has chosen. I have often wondered whether it would be possible to have an effective system of appeal for visitors which does not entail them returning to their country. A useful point which has been established in this debate, of which the right hon. Member for Gorton was wholly unaware, is that if one comes to the United Kingdom with a visa and is refused entry one has the right of appeal here. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman did not know that that right already exists. The question is whether visitors should have a right of appeal in the United Kingdom.

If a right of appeal meant that people took root here, lawyers had long wrangles, months passed and queues lengthened, that would be nonsensical. But it may be possible to have an overnight appeal system which could deal with cases the following day at Heathrow or wherever. I think that that possibility was envisaged some years ago and it is certainly worth thinking about. However, we must be realistic and admit that the practical difficulties of that could be great. There would be the pressure of numbers, the difficulty of hearing the appeal as quickly as possible and the temptation to spin the case out. Nevertheless, it is worth considering the appeal system over time.

When I was at the Home Office I put forward a consultation paper with many ideas, including the right of appeal for long-term illegals. Unfortunately, the reaction of bodies such as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants was so hostile and unreasonable that we did not manage to make much progress and we have been left with the system as it is. It is worth considering whether the appeal system is as it should be.

The fact remains that my right hon. Friend must deal with the present position. I have no doubt that, by proposing visas for some countries where the pressure is intense and there are serious difficulties, he is acting from good sense rather than from any sort of racialist motive. We are already seeing signs that this will be a workable proposition and that it will be possible to handle the applications with the necessary speed. Clearly, if people must wait a long time in Islamabad, Karachi or Dhaka that will be a serious weakness in it, but providing the post can tackle the applications fairly and quickly, the measure will not impose great hardship. Moreover, the nonsenses that have been growing will be curtailed.

Let us not kid ourselves that the hon. Member's right to obtain temporary admission is part of the British constitution. We have an immigration law which covers rights of appeal, but what has appeared is a gloss on the law. To put one's hand on one's heart and to pretend that my right hon. Friend is aborting some sacred constitutional privilege is complete nonsense.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Nearly 30 hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. Unless speeches are shorter, many of them will be disappointed.

8.49 pm

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): The right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) said that Ministers should deal only with matters of substance, but whether matters are substantial depends on whether one is the judge or the appellant. The matters that we are discussing are

[Mr. Cyril Smith]

substantial to all the appellants because they may be sent back to their country of origin without anyone reconsidering the refusal to allow them entry.

When the Home Secretary faced questions in the House last week I said that many of us viewed the imposition of visa requirements in this instance with considerable concern and suspicion. Frankly, I think that it is just another Government cock-up. It is 14 years to the day since I was elected as a Member of Parliament and in those years I have seen many examples of cock-ups from both Labour and Conservative Governments. This is just another monumental one.

The essential point about immigration and race relations laws is that they must be fair. To be fair, they must be applied equally to everyone, irrespective of race, colour or creed. If the Home Secretary had said, for example, that in future the nationals of any country that required visas for British entrants would require visas for our country, that would at least have been fair. If the Government had applied their visa requirements to various countries where more than one colour of skin was involved, that would at least have had an appearance of fairness.

However much the Home Secretary wriggles and says that if we go through all the lists we will find that they balance, the fact is that we are discussing an extension of the existing requirements. That extension applies only to people with black skin. That has inevitably laid the Home Secretary and the Home Office open to charges of racialism, and that is exactly what it is—racialism, pure and simple. It is a veiled attempt to prevent coloured people from coming here, and the Home Secretary should not have been surprised at the Heathrow influx some days ago. I do not accept that that influx demonstrated a desire to cheat. It demonstrated a real fear about the change in the system and fear about how people would be affected. The result was that they got here as fast as they could in an attempt to get in before the system was implemented.

Like other hon. Members, I have applied for many people to be granted temporary admission and I know of only two in five years who have failed to return to their country of origin. However, I have many—I emphasise "many" — letters in my files from the Home Office advising me that people had returned from temporary admission before being required to do so.

The Home Secretary must not wrongly state, as he did at Question Time last week, that hon. Members have had the power to change an executive decision. That is just not true. They have had the power only to ask for a deferment of the implementation of a decision until the case was reconsidered.

The Home Secretary said that in a case raised by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) he had overruled the decision of an immigration officer. I advised the right hon. Gentleman to frame the Home Secretary's decision in that case, because in my 14 years as an hon. Member I have never once had the decision of an immigration officer to refuse entry overturned, overruled or altered by a Home Secretary or his Minister of State.

Nevertheless, what is done is done and we now have to press for answers and for safeguards. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has pressed for some of those and I press for them again. What will happen in an emergency such as, for example, a death and an urgent Moslem funeral? Is there to be a night and a weekend emergency service in our embassies? It is all right saying that people must wait until morning, but every hon. Member knows that if a close relative died we would not go to bed and sleep until 9 o'clock the following morning. We would be phoning the undertaker, informing relatives and so on. We must have an emergency service for people abroad who find themselves in those circumstances.

What guarantee do we have that there will be sufficient staff to cope as waiting lists grow? The Home Secretary said that the system was working smoothly. Surprise, surprise! After only 10 or 14 days, of course it is working well. All those who would have come during the past 14 days came before the system was introduced. However, it will be interesting to see the situation in three months' time and note whether grossly inhuman waiting lists for visas have become common, as has happened with those applying for permanent settlement.

Mrs. Beckett: It may be pertinent to the point that the hon. Gentleman is making if I tell him that at my advice bureau on Friday evening I had visits from two constituents whose relatives — making applications to come here not as visitors, but for settlement—have had notice that the date of their interviews has been deferred for a full year. It seems that the point that the hon. Gentleman is making about the impact on the rest of the system is valid.

Mr. Smith: That raises an interesting question. We must ask whether the effort to deal with visa requirements will have an adverse effect on applications for permanent settlement. The cases that the hon. Member quotes seem to suggest that that is the case.

How quickly will appeals be dealt with? We are talking about visitors coming to this country, not about those coming for permanent settlement. If someone wants to come here, he does not want to have to wait 12 or 18 months for a visa. His holiday or his need is this year and it is ridiculous to suggest that he should wait for months and months. Whatever the Minister may say about speeding up cases, he has said that inquiries will have to be made over here and we all know from our constituency experience what that can mean.

The public imagine that all that people abroad have to do is to come here and they will get in. I must tell our public that that is not the experience of hon. Members. People coming here for permanent settlement, particularly those from the Indian subcontinent, have to jump through an enormous number of hoops. I am sure that all hon. Members know of people who have had to wait for two or three years to have their cases finalised. It can be 15 months before they get their first interview. After that, they must have another interview, the papers are sent to the Home Office, which loses them for six months, someone chases up the case, and so it goes on. I have in my files many cases of people who have had to wait two or two and a half years for final decisions on cases. Many of us are very worried that the extension of visa requirements could result in similar problems. We need answers and clarification to all these questions.

I said at Question Time last week that I appreciated the kindness of the staff in the Home Secretary's office. I support what other Members have said in that respect.

I do not challenge the need for immigration control. I have always thought that such controls should be fair and related to an ability to integrate. They should certainly be non-racial. Bad immigration law is a barrier to good race relations. Things such as queuing systems, primary purpose rules and rules governing the admission of elderly relatives are obstacles to good race relations.

I want those relationships to be improved. I doubt whether many of those employed in the race relations industry help to improve them. My experience is that they often do more harm than good by inflaming and arousing passions that would otherwise lie dormant. Indeed, that sometimes applies to the Commission for Racial Equality itself. It seems to practise racialism in as much as it displays a bias in what it will and will not investigate. In my view, the basis of good race relations should be fairness to all. I reject discrimination and bias because it is unfair.

I do not believe that one can legislate to stop discrimination. However, one can legislate to implement discrimination, as the visa requirements prove. One can and should legislate against racial injustice, but in the end positive action rather than positive discrimination is required. We need action to recruit more coloured police men and police women; action to ensure more adequate housing and fairness in its allocation; action to create more jobs for all in our society; action to ensure that our social services and health services are adequately funded to ensure discrimination does not take place.

I hesitate to say this, but the Labour party's record on racialism is not lily white or pure. The Labour Government introduced the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968 which was blatantly racialist and which deprived citizens of the United Kingdom and the colonies who were not born in the United Kingdom of the automatic right to come to Britain. The Tory Immigration Act 1971, about which we now hear so much from the Labour Benches, was not touched between 1974 and 1979 when we had a Labour Government. Labour's record is not perfect.

I was a Member of Parliament between 1974 and 1979 and I had just as much trouble, if not more, with Labour Ministers about temporary admissions than I have with Tory Ministers. Let us not have too much humbug about racialism because it seems that one tale is told when in Opposition and a different story when in Government.

I hope that we shall have answers to my questions. I hope that we shall hear why more immigration officers could not have been employed at ports of entry rather than at points of embarkation. I also hope that the Minister will assure us that fairness will be the criterion and not limitation of numbers. We are not talking about visas for people coming here permanently but about people who want to visit their relatives—sons, daughters, parents, grandparents and perhaps friends. Principally we are talking about relatives.

I hope that the Minister will not seek to camouflage the issue by suggesting that we are dealing with anything other than visitors. I hope that he will remember that we are speaking of human beings and human souls.

I repeat that the new requirement is racialist. It is unnecessary. It is unfair because it is directed against one colour of person only. That is why my colleagues and I will vote against the rules. Fairness and respect for individual liberty and a respect for the dignity of men and women requires us to do so and that is what we shall do.

9.4 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I listened to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) with interest. I have been in the House as long as anyone and I have had long experience of coloured people who come to the United Kingdom. I was a little disconcerted when I found that several countries were selected for particular attention. I should have preferred a visa system for all countries. That would be comparable with the United States system. That system is simple, operates effectively and does not require an enormous staff. If hon. Members wish to go to Australia, they will find a simple system which allows them to be checked in and out very quickly.

In my experience, when a person comes to the United Kingdom he wants to see his relatives in Coventry, Birmingham or elsewhere. But sometimes a visitor suddenly becomes ill and has medical reasons for staying on for a while. To my credit I have gone against the wishes of the Home Office. A man was put on a dialysis machine and it was essential that he remain here for treatment. That is an example of the problems that are generated. I agree with the hon. Member for Rochdale that we are dealing with human beings, who must be treated accordingly.

If we are to change the system drastically, we must be cautious and ensure we have the correct reasons for doing so. In 1985, of the 8,500 passengers who were given temporary admission after they had been refused entry from the countries concerned, 97·4 per cent. left the United Kingdom at the end of their time, so only a fraction of them went to ground. I am rather impressed by that. My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), who has considerable experience in these matters, can confirm that absconders or those who stay beyond their time are few.

I always insist that I have an opportunity to cross-examine those people. I find that if they or one of the elders of the temple give me a pledge, there is no difficulty in returning them to their countries. The whole arrangement has been somersaulted and put on a basis whereby certain countries have to comply by a certain date, with other countries to be included shortly. Can the Minister tell me whether the system is to be extended still further? Will there eventually be world coverage? Can he estimate the cost involved if it was extended and the number of people likely to be involved in the arrangements?

I was impressed by an earlier suggestion that we could improve on the appeals system. That is probably an intermediate way to deal with the position. However, with the current arrangements, if a person goes to New Delhi and applies for admission, it is a question of the presentation of his case. No Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom can help him with that. He cannot come to the United Kingdom because immediately he arrived here without a visa he would be turned back. Nothing would enable him to remain here. In all the years that I have been handling these cases, I have found that these people do return home and do not stay in this country. I am not impressed by the number who actually go to ground. If we had a system such as that in the USA or Australia, we could simplify matters drastically and find the answers that we need.

I do not wish to speak for too long, but I want to pay tribute to the Minister of State for the way that he has handled cases over the years. I am glad that he has not been elevated from his post—or perhaps I should be

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

sorry, because he has done a remarkably good job. It is important that we have in post a man of understanding, and the Minister, like his predecessor, adopts the right approach.

I know that it is liable to be said against all political parties, "They passed this or that Act". However, we must remember that we are dealing with human beings. They are coming to this country for a holiday and are entitled to see their friends and relatives. They are also entitled to see a little of Britain. There must be fairly weighty reasons that the security services can provide if any of them should not be admitted. I find myself in great difficulty tonight and must decide precisely what I must do.

9.9 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on his important contribution to the debate, and also on having the courage to say what I hope many Conservative Members feel. Those of us who care about people know that this debate is about the treatment of our citizens and of their families and friends. Our complaint throughout has been that the treatment at Heathrow has been a disgrace to this country. The answer provided by the Government is to take the treatment away from Heathrow altogether and to shift it back to India and other countries. They have created a problem to impose a solution.

As the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North has said, there was no problem, and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) pointed out in his most powerful speech, absconders are very rare. I respectfully suggest that they will not be less rare because the checking is done by post in Bombay instead of at Heathrow by looking at the application. I would be astonished if there were not more absconders rather than fewer.

The real problem is the treatment of our citizens and their families and friends at Heathrow, and it will not be solved by this system because what is happening is simply a transfer of the problem elsewhere. We are not discussing immigration, on which we have differing views, but the treatment of visitors. That treatment will become miserably worse as time goes on.

There are not enough interpreters or visa officers, so the Government have decided to have more officers sent out to India. The Government are meant to be concerned with costs to the taxpayer. I had two answers at the end of last week and I suspect that the Ministers concerned could not have known what the other was producing. I asked the Home Secretary

"what he estimates to be the cost of the training and placement of visa or immigration officers at Heathrow airport; and what is the minimum, the average and the maximum cost of the employment of a visa or immigration officer at Heathrow airport."

In other words, what would it have cost to put in extra people at Heathrow? The answer was:

"The information readily available is as follows. On first appointment, immigration officers undergo 10 weeks training comprising a six weeks course followed by four weeks desk training. Throughout this period they receive the basic salary in the range of £5,605 to £10,188, plus allowances. The average cost per place of non-residential courses at the Immigration Service training unit at Harmondsworth is in the order of £200 a week. Interviewing passengers from a number of countries, including in particular the Indian subcontinent, also requires the services of interpreters."

In other words, on average, about £10,000 is required to put somebody in at Heathrow.

The Government of business replied to the other question, this time to the Foreign Secretary. I asked

"what he estimates will be the maximum and the average cost of sending a visa or immigration officer to India as a result of the Government's new visa requirements; how many such officers he expects to send; and what will be the total cost of training and sending such officers to India."

The reply was:

"The maximum cost of posting an entry clearance officer to India is £126,000 per year based on 1986-87 prices. (This relates to Bombay, where costs are highest.) The average cost is £121,800."

I thought that a nought had been added on by mistake. We are all perfectly capable of doing that, particularly the business Government dealing with public funds in this sector. He goes on:

"Twelve additional entry clearance officers are being sent to India at a total costs of £1·46 million at 1986-87 prices. Initially there will be no additional training costs because experienced immigration officers are beng sent to posts." —[*Official Report*, 22 October 1986, Vol. 102, c. *913*.]

In other words, instead of £10,000 a head to do the job better at Heathrow, where one can see the people and the passports, it will cost an average of £121,000—at least 10 times as much—to do the job worse on the other side of the world. Why? It has nothing to do with efficiency. It has nothing to do with the taxpayers' pocket and neither has it anything to do with solving the problem of overcrowding at Heathrow. It is the Government's solution, determined as they are to impose it at whatever cost to the British taxpayer. British taxpayers do not know about this and I hope that after this debate they will say that the Government have cheated British citizens who want their family and friends to visit them and have cheated taxpayers generally by imposing a solution at 10 times the cost that would have been incurred had they done the job properly. The result is that the job will be done in a worse way, and I suggest that it is a disgraceful way of creating a problem to find a solution—to impose a solution — which is harmful, unkind, inconsiderate, inefficient and extremely expensive.

How is the pressure to be removed from the officers at Heathrow? Any sensible, decent Government who care about people would say, "We shall have more visa officers and interpreters at Heathrow." They might even say, "Let us remove the pressure from the Minister, poor fellow, and especially from his staff." I pay tribute to the staff, to the civil servants who do their best within the limits of the discretion which is not allowed to them to help in individual cases where they are able to do so. I have found that they act with persistent courtesy and patience in most instances.

I inquired how the job would be done where ordinary people were involved. In Leicester we are proud of our multiracial city. Life has not been easy and problems have been created, but on the whole people are living together well and are treated as people, irrespective of their colour or origin. In Leicester most of those who were immigrants and who are now citizens do not like being regarded as immigrants. They feel that they are citizens in the same way as the rest of us. Most come from the state of Gujarat. When they want their families to come, the families will have to apply for visas in Gujarat. How will that be done? I made inquiries about that and was told that the maximum distance that someone in Gujarat would have

to travel to apply for a visa in Bombay would be about 875 km. I was told, however, that many of the applications will be dealt with by post.

Most of us want to treat people equally irrespective of whether they are wealthy or poor. Most of the families and friends of my constituents are not very well off and it is too costly for them to travel by air. If they take a train, it will take two or three days to travel to Bombay. There they will have to wait and hope for the best. They will then travel back to Gujarat and have still to return again to Bombay. That will have to be done to obtain a visa, and the system becomes an impossibility.

I said, I hope reasonably, "If you insist on having this rotten system, what about opening a consulate in Ahmedabad, a place where you will be servicing hundreds of thousands of British citizens and their families and friends who will come to you on lawful business?" The answer was one word, no, or nyet, which is the Russian approach to immigration, emigration, visitors and visas. That should not be permitted in Britain, because we should apply the same standards that we expect of others and other countries when we deal with other people in our country, when we have citizens who want their families and friends to come here.

Finally, we have the removal of the right of a Member of Parliament to make interventions on behalf of his constituents. My job and that of my father before me is and was to look after all the citizens of Leicester, West, irrespective of their background, colour or origin, irrespective of whether they live on council estates or in private houses and irrespective of whether they were born in Leicester, Glasgow or overseas. The job of every decent Member is to look after his constituents. In this great and marvellous democracy we have access to Ministers in a way that my grandparents, who came from what is now a part of the Soviet Union, never dreamed would be possible in a country. That access is to be gained through personal approaches and questions and debates in the House. But, above all, access is to be found in the right to approach a Minister on any subject on behalf of any constituent who believes that he or she is downtrodden. That is our right as Members and it is being taken away. That is the ultimate disgrace of this evil new system.

9.19 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): This issue is of very special interest and importance to my constituency, which immediately adjoins Heathrow airport. The interviewing of passengers at this major port of entry is a matter which has for many years involved me personally when, like other hon. Members, I am frequently asked to make representations to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State on behalf of visitors who are refused entry. Therefore, I am able to consider the proposed changes in the light of considerable personal experience of the way in which the system works.

I can speak, as can many hon. Members, from personal observation of the way in which representations by hon. Members have been dealt with by my hon. and learned Friend and his predecessors. Representations have grown over the years from a mere trickle to a substantial number. This is borne out by the increase from 1,000 representations a year in 1981 and 1982 to 9,000 this year. I join other hon. Members in paying tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and his staff for the way in which they have handled those representations.

Not long ago, the House had an opportunity to debate the extent of representations. Hon. Members have been asked to observe certain protocols in the way in which they make those representations. Because of that debate, the existing system has become widely known throughout the countries from which most of those visitors come.

I know from personal experience that some—not all — visitors who are refused entry approach, via a relative, one or more Members and ask them to intervene on their behalf. As we know, this results in a stop on deportation. Frequently, the persons concerned remain in the United Kingdom for three or more months until my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and his officers have considered the representations and eventually made the necessary decision. I tell the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) that, in my experience, as a result of those representations, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has changed the view expressed by immigration officers. That has happened on a number of occasions. I heard of one such case only today.

Once an intending visitor knows that the system exists —many now do as a result of the debate some months ago—it is simple for those who wish to do so to second-guess the immigration officer's decision by means of representations by a Member of Parliament. The result is that many stay for three or four months, despite the refusal of entry. Many are subsequently removed because, after consideration, their explanation for coming to the United Kingdom is not accepted. In 1981, 13,000 people were removed. In the 12 months to June 1986, the number jumped to 22,000. That is substantial. It presents a clear idea of the burden resting on the Home Office in dealing with this difficult matter involving people who travel long distances to come to our country.

We also know that during that period—the past year for which figures are available — some 430 visitors absconded. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that that is not a large number, given the number of people who come to this country from all over the world. However, it is sufficient to worry many people in this country who feel that it is not acceptable that over 400 people have disappeared into the community over the past year. They are illegal immigrants and most of them would not be here were it not for the ability to stay which is secured following representations by a relative to one or more Members of Parliament.

Some visitors who have sought the intervention of an hon. Member have been admitted as a result. Clearly, therefore, there is a need for a system of appeal against refusals. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is providing for that where a visa is refused under the proposed new arrangements. That appeal is to be considered in the country of origin. It will avoid the unnecessary expense of air travel by intending visitors who do not have a proper reason for visiting this country. It will also ensure for the relatives and friends of visitors, the people we represent, that a proposed visit can be properly planned and that entry will be swift, courteous and without the risk of delay or, at worst, detention. It will mean that a visitor from, for example, India will be able to come to Britain for a family wedding without all of the problems that have arisen in the past when for some reason they have been refused entry.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) raised what I thought was a valid point; that is the method by which an individual living in the

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

Indian subcontinent applies for a visa. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will give an indication of the practical arrangements for making that application, that he will make it clear that it can be made by post and that long journeys from one part of the Indian subcontinent to another are not necessary. I hope that he will be able to tell the House that there will be an efficient and swift method of dealing with applications through the post.

I am sure that any fair-minded hon. Member will agree that there has been some abuse of the system of approaching an hon. Member in order to secure a stop on deportation. We all know that that is the case. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) referred to a case last week during his remarks on the statement where he had decided, after careful thought, not to intervene on behalf of an intending visitor to this country. Within a comparatively short space of time after that decision the case had been raised with my hon. Friend the Minister by the office of the Leader of the Opposition. Doubtless it had been raised by another relative who lives in the Leader of the Opposition's constituency. The fact is that there is a certain amount of playing the system which amounts to abuse.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Shersby: I shall not give way because other hon. Members wish to speak and the hon. Gentleman has had a good go already.

Hon. Members will still be able to make representations about particular cases, although they will not be able to place an automatic stop on deportation.

I was interested in the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) about the possibility of some form of overnight appeal system to deal with those who are refused visas when they come to this country. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister may be able to comment on that when he replies. It has been said by the right hon. Member for Gorton, and even by the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Gandhi, that the introduction of visas is a racist measure because it applies to black people from the Indian subcontinent and Africa. I have to reject that view. Why is it racist for Britain to demand an entry visa from, for example, an Indian citizen when India demands one from every British citizen? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Janner *rose*——

Mr. Shersby: If hon. Gentlemen will be patient I shall develop my argument. I will not give way to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) because he has had his say.

The same question applies to Bangladesh, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. All of those are Commonwealth countries. However, if we are talking about countries which have black citizens, and Opposition Members have made a lot of noise about black citizens tonight, I suggest that Opposition Members consider the many countries on the list of countries which require visas from British citizens. Opposition Members would then find plenty of countries having black citizens in that list which demand visas from us. I have a copy of the list and any hon. Member can read the question which I tabled to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary this week. That will prove that many countries with black citizens demand visas from British citizens.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shersby: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will not give way. I know that many hon. Members wish to speak.

In fact, 83 countries demand visas from British citizens who wish to enter those countries as visitors.

Mr. Kaufman: How many countries do we demand visas from?

Mr. Shersby: In response to the sedentary intervention from the right hon. Member for Gorton, we demand visas from visitors from more than 50 countries seeking entry to the United Kingdom. If the right hon. Gentleman is not familiar with those countries—as I am sure that he must be—I suggest that he studies the list.

Australia is one of the countries demanding visas from British citizens. When I visited Australia I had to obtain my entry visa from the Australian High Commission in London. When I arrived I went through immigration control without undue delay. My name was entered on the master computer and when I left Australia from a completely different point from my port of entry, my name was taken off the computer. I do not believe that there is anything racist about the people from Australia, India, Bangladesh, Ghana, Nigeria or Sierra Leone demanding a visa from me to enter their countries. Nor do I consider that the United States is racialist in demanding a visa.

Each country is fully entitled to exercise control, by means of an entry visa, over who enters their territory. As I have said, Britain demands entry visas from more than 50 countries many of which have black citizens. The charge of racism is nonsense and humbug. It should be dismissed by the House.

That charge could only be made in such a cynical manner by the right hon. Member for Gorton in a speech which I thought reached an all-time low. The only conclusion that I can draw from his remarks is that he is cynically trying, by his opposition to visas, to secure the votes of British citizens of Indian and African origin. If that is what the right hon. Gentleman is trying to achieve, he will not succeed. Our fellow citizens want a proper system of entry which is fair and smooth running. I believe that the new system will achieve that. It will ensure the ability to visit the United Kingdom without the difficulties with which we have become so familiar.

With more than 37 million passengers having to be seen by immigration officers in 1985 and with the pressure most keenly felt at Heathrow, it is clearly necessary to take sensible action to ensure that people are not subject to delays of two and a half hours or more. Every time that I come through Heathrow airport from abroad, I sympathise with those people from all over the world who have to wait for an unduly long time. For those reasons I intend to vote for the Government's proposals in the Lobby tonight.

In conclusion, I listened with great care to the right hon. Member for Gorton about the Labour party's policy on this matter. He gave me the impression that it is the Labour party's policy to maintain firm and fair control over immigration. I was glad to hear that. I hope that he

will be able to clarify that point if he has the opportunity because I was under the strong impression that when the Leader of the Opposition was in India he said that the Labour party would scrap all immigration laws on the ground that they are discriminatory and racist. For that reason I was glad to hear what the right hon. Member for Gorton said tonight. He gave an important clarification of Labour party policy which many hon. Members will be glad to have heard.

When considering this difficult matter, which affects our fellow citizens and human beings from all over the world, we must remember that we must ensure that entry to the United Kingdom is not spoilt by the system that we have had to endure for the past few months. We should move on to a system under which people coming to Britain can look forward to entry without problems so that they can meet their relatives and friends or come here for a holiday or any other proper purpose for which they are granted admission.

9.34 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): It is clear that those who have orchestrated the campaign for the introduction of visas had two objectives. First, they wanted to reduce the number of black and Asian visitors to the United Kingdom; secondly, they wanted to remove the rights of Members of Parliament to assist visitors who are refused entry.

The introduction of visas is perceived as racist by many people here and overseas. It is clearly damaging to promotion of good community relations in Britain, and it has further damaged the poor relationship between Britain and the black Commonwealth. The Government have argued that visas will reduce delays, especially at Heathrow, and the inconvenience and difficulties experienced by visitors and their sponsors and relatives here.

The most cost-effective way in which to deal with the delays, inconvenience and indignities experienced at Heathrow is to appoint more immigration officers and more interpreters and to provide better examination accommodation. The Government could have taken such administrative action long ago.

Like other hon. Members, during the past two years I have raised in the House the question of the inconvenience and difficulties experienced at Heathrow. I met the Minister of State in early June to urge him to appoint more immigration officers and to take other steps to deal with the looming crisis at Heathrow. I was told that there would be 11 extra immigration officers. None were appointed, because they refused transfers and appealed against the transfer instructions.

Some immigration officers and Right-wing sections of the Conservative party have campaigned for visas for at least 18 months. During that time there has been a deliberate increase in the number of refusals. When challenged about that, the Home Office has been able to offer no explanation. In the first quarter of this year, one in five Bangladeshis, one in 19 Pakistanis and one in 25 Indians who applied to visit Britain were refused entry.

Visas are resented by people who want to visit and by people who are settled here. They will now experience great difficulty in getting their friends and relatives to visit them. Moreover, they will have to apply for visa exemption stamps if they are to avoid difficulty themselves. Visas add to their sense of alienation. Visas underline their belief that they are unwelcome in the eyes of those who advocate visas. It seems that it is undesirable that they should have friends and relatives who want to visit them.

The introduction of visas is considered racist because their application is selective. That charge would not be made if we were also asking South Africans, Americans or Australians to have visas. The Home Secretary has today made one of the most inadequate speeches that the House has ever had to endure on an important constitutional issue. The fact that he skulked out of the Chamber during the debate demonstrates that he might have learnt something about the issue had he remained. It is also disgraceful that the junior Minister at the Foreign Office has left the Chamber. We have a large number of questions to ask, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has responsibility for these matters. It is therefore disgraceful that that Minister has left the Chamber and that he did not hear the questions that were asked by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) and by many of my hon. Friends.

This system is widely perceived as being racist. It will cause delays and inconvenience. Before the junior Minister left the Chamber he muttered under his breath that visas would be issued on the same day as applications were made. It is a pity that he could not tell me that when I wrote to him. In the reply that I received a few days ago he said nothing about the average waiting time for visa applications, and he could give me no information about staffing arrangements.

The guidance issued by the Home Office states that applications in writing should be made at least one month before a person intends to leave his country to visit the United Kingdom. The same rule applies to personal applications. Therefore, one cannot assume that applications will be approved on the day that they are submitted.

I have also been told that applicants will have to choose which application form is appropriate for them. The forms are printed in English, and I understand that one question is:

"Are you a British Citizen by descent or other means?"

It will be impossible for many of the applicants to fill in the forms. It will result in a bonanza for corruption. Many of those who apply for visas will have to rely upon assistance from agents in their own area. This will provide the bread and butter for the corruption about which the Government say they are so concerned and which they advance as one of the reasons for the introduction of visas.

Visa control is wholly discredited. Speaker after speaker in the debate has told us why. People in India and Pakistan now have to wait for six or 12 months for an interview and a decision on their application for settlement here. In Bangladesh they have to wait for 25 months. When the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), replies to the debate, we are entitled to an answer to the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) wishes to have answered: what will be the effect of these provisions on the applications for settlement that have already been made? Is the Minister able to give a guarantee that none of these applications for settlement will be further deferred by the introduction of visas for visitors? We are entitled to a clear assurance on that point.

Ms. Short: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has circulated a leaflet about how

[Ms. Short]

the system will work? It says that he hopes that the consequential delays over entry certificate applications for permanent settlement will not be too great, thus admitting that the new system will have an effect.

Mr. Madden: There will clearly be delays. The surges will continue. The administrative arrangements are wholly inadequate to deal with the surges in applications. If the same criteria are to be applied to visa applications overseas as are applied now at Heathrow, we may expect the same rate of refusals overseas as there are now at Heathrow.

Visas were introduced in Sri Lanka over a bank holiday weekend—again without any consultation, and still less without the approval of this House. The rate of refusals in Sri Lanka has increased from 0·004 to 8·5 per cent. Exactly the same increase in the rate of refusals will be found in the countries that we are considering tonight.

The clear fact of the matter is that the Government and the ISU resent Members of Parliament being able to help and that is why they have promoted this visa campaign and have been so desperate to stop Members of Parliament from being able to assist their constituents. We have seen that campaign aided and abetted by Britain's gutter press.

On 16 October the headline in *The Sun* was "The Liars". As *The Sun* is so well known for the fiction that it prints, rather than the fact, and as the stories are dreamt up by the reporters on numerous occasions, I thought that the headline was referring to *The Sun*, but it was not. It said:

"Harassed airport staff told yesterday of the '1,001 lies' used by immigrants trying to cheat their way into Britain."

It referred to tourists who say that they have come to see the sights such as Slough and Bradford. Is it surprising that many visitors here are coming to Slough and Bradford, when large numbers of their relatives and friends live in those areas?

The paper went on to say:

"Others insist they have flown 6,000 miles to 'see the snow' or to attend a family wedding — though they cannot produce an invitation and do not know the names of the bride and groom."

That is in no way remarkable. An immigration officer is quoted as saying:

"The biggest lie of all, of course, is that they intend to go back home after their visit. They produce a return ticket as proof that they intend to fly back. But in many cases they just cash in the return half of the ticket and disappear."

We know from the figures published by the Home Office that that is nonsense.

The *Daily Express* of 17 October had the headline:

"Soft touch MPs. Loophole that gave a licence to vanish."

Mr. Marlow: How many stops has the hon. Gentleman put on this year? How many apply to other people's constituencies?

Mr. Tony Banks: At least my hon. Friend is doing his job, which is more than the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is doing. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) knows perfectly well that he must not shout across the Chamber in that fashion. I hope that he will restrain himself.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That little worm over there said that I do not do my job, and I should like him to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is not raising a point of order, he is persisting in the disorderly conduct about which I have just warned him. I hope that he will restrain himself.

Mr. Madden: On 17 October the *Daily Express* said:

"New rules mean that if anyone arrives at Heathrow, without a visa, they will not be allowed to phone an MP to intervene and stop immigration staff kicking them out of the country."

That is nonsense, as any hon. Member knows. Calls are not made directly by visitors refused entry to Britain, and our interventions do not achieve what the *Daily Express* says. The article continued:

"Before the clampdown, once an MP took up a case, the new arrival had to be given temporary admission to Britain until an investigation by the Home Office."

Again that is nonsense, as any hon. Member who has experience of such matters knows.

The Home Secretary, in his deplorable speech tonight, said that there were people who were in detention only as a result of stops that had been made by hon. Members. If it were so easy for those people to be released, why have those 80 people now in detention not been released? The *Daily Express* continued:

"That could take months—and by then, immigration staff say, many of the immigrants have vanished."

Again that is nonsense.

I come to an interesting quote from a Home Office spokesman. He said:

"We lost count how many absconded while their case was being considered. And in most cases at the end of the review the original decision to refuse entry was upheld."

Again that is nonsense. I wonder whether the Minister of State has called that spokesman, speaking with the authority of the Home Office, to account for the quote which appeared in the *Daily Express* on Friday 17 October.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The debate has focused on the Government's racist decision on immigration. One of my constituents, a lady living in Lemington, on the outskirts of Newcastle, is married to a Yugoslav citizen. They both worked in Yugoslavia for some time after their marriage but decided to come to Britain to settle. They both had jobs to come to, but the husband had to apply for a visa although he is married to a British citizen. He lost the job that he was coming to in Britain because of the delay by the Home Office over his visa application.

Mr. Madden: That sort of case is familiar to many of us. I quote again from the *Daily Express*, this time from the editorial of 17 October. The headline stated:

"Right to end MPs' abuse of power".

The editorial stated:

"Some politicians are thought soft touches, who probably help visitors with no right to be here slip through the immigration net."

Those words are characteristic of the coverage of this issue by the so-called popular press during the past few weeks. It is noticeable that the Press Gallery, with the exception of the *Hansard* reporters, has been almost empty during most of the debate. Many members of the press, together with the Home Secretary, could have learnt a little about this subject had they taken the time and trouble to listen to the debate, rather than writing misleading reports and editorials.

When the Minister of State replies, I hope that he will be clear about the rights of Members of Parliament. In

what circumstances will we be able to assist those who wish to visit Britain and who arrive here without a visa? How will hon. Members do that unless the Minister of State gives clear assurances that such people will not be removed within hours of their arrival, so that hon. Members have sufficient time to get information and to help such people and their relatives and friends in Britain?

I should like specific information on how Members of Parliament will assist constituents whose friends or relatives are applying for visas, especialy in emergencies such as family sickness and family death. How can hon. Members assist the relatives and friends of constituents who are refused visas overseas? How can we assist constituents whose friends and relatives are granted visas, arrive here and then wish to extend their visas while they are here? How will we help students? The Home Secretary garbled something about the circumstances in which hon. Members would be able to assist students, but the guidance issued by the Home Office, which the Minister of State was kind enough to send me recently, says that students must also have a letter of acceptance from the institute where they are to study and must show that they can meet the cost of their tuition.

If there are to be such effective visa controls overseas, how can any student arrive here without a visa? How can hon. Members therefore assist in any circumstances? I hope that the Minister will say something about students, because he knows that student bodies in Britain have expressed grave concern about the effect of visa controls on students and institutions of education in Britain.

Let the Minister be very clear when he replies. Will the Foreign Office provide the same sort of duty officer coverage as we have enjoyed from the Home Office for a long time? I pay tribute to those duty officers and to members of the Minister of State's private office for their considerable co-operation and assistance, but will the same facilities be available at the Foreign Office? Will the overseas posts be manned at weekends? The hon. Member for Rochdale raised the matter of night telephones, but will they be manned at weekends, so that emergency applications for visas can be made? Will our representations be transmitted to overseas posts by the Foreign Office?

Today I received a letter from a constituent, enclosing his mother's passport. He asked me to arrange for a visa exemption stamp to be put on the passport. If I send it to the Home Office, will that stamp be placed in that passport? I, along with many other hon. Members, will frequently be asked for that facility. I understand that the Home Office suggested that, on departure, immigration officers should be able to stamp passengers' passports with a right to return to Britain without a visa. I also understand that the Minister's good friends in the Immigration Service flatly refuse to co-operate in such a scheme. Will the Minister have the courage to go back to his good friends in the Immigration Service Union and say that such a facility would be extremely helpful to overseas nationals who are settled in this country, and who do not want to have to apply in writing or in person to London or to their nearest passport inquiry office to get an exemption stamp placed on their passports? The vast majority of these people find the whole thing insulting anyway.

I condemn the Government's proposal. It is nakedly racist and represents an incompetent blunder that will disrupt the promotion of good community and race relations in this country. It has brought our already deplorable relationships with the black Commonwealth to a new all-time low. Incidentally, we have heard little about when visas for Nigeria will be introduced. I wrote to all the ambassadors and high commissioners asking what consultations the British Government have had with their Governments. They all said none, and many of them have expressed their views very forcefully.

I received a particularly interesting letter from the high commissioner for Nigeria. He told me that he was invited to a private meeting with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 18 July

"when the concern of the British authorities at the increase of Nigerians arriving at British entry points was discussed with me."

Why was the Nigerian high commissioner invited to that meeting? What makes Nigeria so different from the other countries? Why has an announcement not been made about visas for Nigeria?

I understand that visas are not likely to be introduced until well into the new year. I, and no doubt others, will wonder whether that has anything to do with oil or with capital receipts held in this country from Nigeria. Why was the high commissioner for Nigeria invited to a very private meeting with an Under-Secretary of State? Indeed, that hon. Gentleman saw fit to leave the debate some hours ago. I hope that the Minister of State will give us an explanation.

This shoddy, squalid measure will be repealed by the next Labour Government, as was made clear in the statement issued by the NEC at our last annual conference. A Labour Government will introduce non-discriminatory legislation to replace the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981. There will also be a major overhaul of the immigration rules, as they cause great difficulty to those who have a legitimate right to enter and visit Britain. The Government have not won the debate, although they will win tonight by administrative means. However, fair and reasonable people will see this as nothing more than a squalid, racist measure that needs to be repealed at the earliest opportunity.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Well over 20 hon. Members still wish to catch my eye, and some of them are going to be disappointed. Over-long speeches encroach on the right to speak of other hon. Members.

10 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) was so keen to get over his synthetic indignation that he totally ignored your previous exhortation to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not ignore that request, even though the hon. Gentleman was more concerned to express his hysterical views than to allow other hon. Members, who know as much about the subject as he does, to speak.

Mr. Kaufman: Get on with it.

Mr. Dykes: I had to listen to the tirade of humbug by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). I shall get on with my speech and I shall be more succinct than the right hon. Gentleman. Without hysteria I want to put over the proper case in support of this change in the regulations. I am not as close to Heathrow airport as my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) but we must all dispassionately and honestly say that we have become more and more anxious about the way the system is working. It is operating to the detriment of bona fide visitors from many countries and especially from the countries that we are debating.

Contrary to the fears of Opposition Members, the visa system will be fairer to visitors than the present system. That is because the present system is getting out of hand and any hon. Member who pretends otherwise for superficial reasons of currying favour with a section of our national community or seeking cheap votes in the coming election is making a big mistake. They are also wrong in thinking that many of the immigrants who have come in in the last decade or so agree with their spurious and superficial arguments. They do not, because they want a system that is fair to all visitors.

I am beguiled by the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) that perhaps we should extend this visa system to more countries as time goes on. There is a lot of sense and rationale in that suggestion. This is not a beginning, because we already apply the visa system to many countries. The idea that it applies just to countries whose people are black or brown and not to countries with white populations is absurd. For different historical reasons we have applied it to various countries over the years and now we are extending the system. It will make a lot more sense to visitors wanting to come to Britain to have those visas in their passports before they leave their national territories. They will be safe and secure in the knowledge that the processing at Heathrow or at other airports or ports if they come by other means of transport or if they come from the continent of Europe will be much more speedy. It is absurd to say this is a retrograde step. It is a good step.

I welcome the ending of unfair pressure on hon. Members. I do not say unfair in the sense that we resent the amount of work involved because we do not, but sometimes in my surgeries a large number of these cases prevent me from looking at many cases of domestic problems, often affecting members of the ethnic minority communities as well as the host community.

Ms. Clare Short: Does the hon. Gentleman not share my fear that the people who will not get visas will be those on low incomes in their home countries? They would like to come to see their families settled in Britain, but they tend to be discriminated against through the entry certificate system for permanent settlement. That is because anyone with a low income is suspected of having an intention to remain. When a visa system is in operation the genuine visitors coming to see my families settled in Ladywood will be turned down and visits for them will become impossible.

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) makes a valid point. Unfortunately, under all immigration or temporary visitor systems in all countries the officers empowered to handle the systems are naturally psychologically more inclined to let someone in if he is prosperous and well dressed and coming from a wealthy background. We can build corrective elements into the system which will avoid that problem. The Government are advocating the implementation of the postal application system. That will be much better for those applying for visas.

Some hon. Members have talked about long journeys but it is not our fault that some of these countries are large and people have to travel long distances. *[Interruption.]* I am making a perfectly logical point but the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) is getting carried away. People have to come to the capital city or to a large city to make the air journey. We must avoid this awful problem of people arriving here, having paid the air fare, and then having to go back. That money has been wasted and those people are deprived of the opportunity to visit their relations. I predict that if, by some grotesque national misadventure, a Labour Government were to be installed next time, which I do not expect, they would keep the visa system in place and probably extend it. By then they would realise how well the new system was working. People could apply for their visas easily and speedily.

Obviously, we will have to send more officers and officials to the operating centres to handle the applications, including to Africa, but the system will work much better than the awful, humiliating nightmare of ghastly queues at Heathrow airport. I share with other hon. Members the feeling of sympathy for those people who line up, worried sick about whether they will be admitted, what will happen, the long explanations that they must give to the entry clearance officer, and the fact that they cannot properly contact people until after that stage, while we go through with our passports with no difficulty.

Then there are the visitors who come to our surgeries and say that before they left India they were told that if there was any trouble they should contact the nearest Member of Parliament who would put the position right. The whole system has become absurd. I do not doubt the validity of doing that in genuine cases, but how can hon. Members of Parliament judge that? We are not experts. We need the expert training of immigration and temporary entrance officers to do that.

We do not know how many people are misbehaving and breaking the rules, but we know beyond any doubt that even if it is a small minority, those who do so, like naughty boys at the back of a class, are spoiling it for everyone and causing tremendous trouble.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Dykes: I shall not give way because of a lack of time. I shall be brief.

The visa system will be an ideal mechanism to overcome that problem. There will inevitably be problems when people apply, but I hope that they will be ajudged in their own country. I hope that the vast majority will apply through the new postal system. Applications must be and can be processed speedily. I hope that we shall see the system functioning rationally and smoothly, avoiding all the present nonsense. I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, West was not suggesting that we on this side agree with the rubbish written in *The Sun*.

Every hon. Member who has spoken has embarrassed my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State by paying glowing tribute, rightly, to his office and officials, but let us also pay tribute to immigration and temporary entrance officers who will be listening to the debate. I am the first hon. Member in this debate to say that theirs is not an easy job. We should pay tribute to their painstaking work in the face of grinding hours of work, with long queues shuffling through the airports. They, too, deserve a pat on the back for the humane, fair way in which they operate. We must avoid the hysteria of the Opposition, lead by the right hon. Member for Gorton. They are seeking to make short-term capital for obvious purposes, but they will not succeed, least of all with sensible immigrants and temporary visitors.

Mr. Speaker: It my be for the convenience of the House if I say that the first Front Bench speaker will seek to rise at 10 minutes to 11 o'clock. There have been long speeches and there is a long list of hon. Gentlemen who wish to take part.

10.7 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Two weeks ago the nephew of one of my constituents arrived at Heathrow from Bangladesh. He is a young man, wishing to visit his uncle for six weeks. He has two children in Bangladesh, a job to return to and a return ticket. He was refused admission at the airport. Because I intervened on his behalf he is still in detention. He is one of many victims of the absurd rush with which the Government introduced visa requirements for visitors from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. He is one among many whose relatives I have met and talked to during the past three weeks whose relatives have been caused enormous distress by the appalling way in which they and their visitors have been treated.

Not only are visitors who wish to stay with their relatives living in appalling conditions at Heathrow, but their relatives must travel to and from the airport without information, with precious little assistance and without knowing what is happening and under what conditions their relatives are being handled. Those people have suffered because of the Government's decision.

We are also worried about people who will wish to come here in future to visit their friends and relatives. What sort of treatment will they receive under the Government's new proposals? I am glad that many of my hon. Friends have recorded our distress, disquiet and anger at the manner in which many thousands of people visiting this country have been treated over the past few weeks. They have had a bad welcome from the Government and the country. It is a shame and disgrace to us all, but particularly to the Home Secretary who decided to introduce the visas.

The Home Secretary claims tht he is worried about people who are not bona fide visitors and who may abscond. Perhaps he should do as I did last weekend and speak to British Airways staff who deal with the cashing in of return tickets. That is one excellent guide to whether people intend to disappear into the community, as a Conservative member put it earlier. I was told that many people want to cash in the return half of their tickets, but the overwhelming majority are young, white Australians. Where is the Government's panic about Australian immigration? Where is the concern to impose visas on visitors from Australia? If the Government were really worried about people absconding, they would be taking action in that area.

We have to look elsewhere to find the reasons why the Government are precipitately imposing visa requirements on a selective group of five countries.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the panic created by the Government was essentially the product of a series of subjective and racist decisions by immigration officers over the past year to create just the atmosphere in which visas could be introduced and to create a racist hype for further restrictive immigration legislation later?

Mr. Smith: I certainly agree that there has been an absurd panic in bringing in these measures. If a Government announce that in 10 days' time they will impose a visa requirement, people will inevitably seek, in an urgent rush, to get in to visit their relatives, because they may fear that it will be their last chance for a long time to see people whom they have been wanting to see for many months or years.

I wish to put some specific questions to the Minister of State. First, what will happen to people in rural and remote areas of Bangladesh? Many such people have relatives in my constituency and they may wish to apply for visas to come here. The Government said that they will entertain postal applications, but what will be done about people who are not articulate, who perhaps cannot write or cannot read or write English? What provision will be made if the high commission in Dhaka decides to summon people for interviews because their applications are not clear? What provision will be made to enable people to travel to the high commission? Some may have to travel long distances or undertake difficult journeys to get the visa or even perhaps have their application turned down. Serious problems will arise and I do not believe that the Government have addressed them.

Secondly, there will be problems for people who are legitimately settled here, who hold foreign passports and wish to return here after visits abroad. The Government have said that a wretched visa exemption stamp can be put in passports, but how easy will it be to get one of those stamps? Will people have to queue for hours to have a visa put into their passports? Why is there not some provision for a stamp to be put in automatically at the port of departure when people leave to go abroad? Perhaps the Government might consider that as a genuine possibility to ease the plight of those who are legitimately settled here and wish to travel abroad.

The Government seem to be talking with two voices about how much of a guarantee of entry a visa will be. We listened to the Home Secretary's statement last week. We should have been justified in concluding that there was no guarantee that the provision of a valid visa would guarantee entry into this country. The Home Secretary

[Mr. Smith]

appeared to make that crystal clear in his response to questions last week, yet today the Home Secretary said that someone in possession of a visa should feel confident about gaining entry into Britain.

Which Home Secretary's statement are we to believe? What provision will be made and what criteria will apply in assessing whether someone in possession of a valid visa will be allowed to come in without let or hindrance? Will there be a lenghty questioning procedure, as at present? Will there be two questioning sessions—one by the high commission in Dhaka and another at Heathrow? Alternatively, are we witnessing tonight the institution of two hurdles rather than one for people who legitimately wish to visit their relatives in Britain?

Many aspects of the proposals are inhumane, unwelcoming, over-complicated, discriminating and impose enormous difficulties for thousands of innocent victims and visitors whose only crime — whose only dastardly crime in the eyes of the Government—is that they want to visit their relatives in Britain. It is the duty of those who represent the relatives, it is the duty of the House in all sensible decency, to reject the Government's proposals and to ask the Home Secretary, even at this late stage, please to think again.

10.17 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I shall be brief, but I must point out that the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) about his constituent who had to wait because of entry visa control will not be necessary once the visas are applied. The Government's intention is to try to stop the type of case to which he referred.

I rise because of the massive accusations levelled by the Opposition. Too much seems to be accepted these days because people shelter behind the argument that words or actions are anti-racialist. Sometimes an argument is accepted because it is against racialist tendencies. Equally, many people are afraid to express normal thoughts about our country for fear of being accused of being racialist, as we have heard today.

If anything has convinced me of that it is the speeches by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), who suggested that our actions were similar to those of the Russians. They prove to me that the Labour party has no intention of holding to immigration control as the majority of our people wish.

I speak with all the feeling of one who has many coloured friends. I have been chairman of the Anglo-Ghanaian parliamentary group for over 20 years. Tom Mboya and Kwame Nkrumah met me at my flat in Paddington in 1951 to discuss pan-Africanism, so no one need make accusations about my qualifications.

I do not believe that it will do anything other than good for the genuine Ghanaians who want to come here to have to obtain a visa before they leave their country, rather than face refusal when they arrive. I have had to intervene with the Home Office on many occasions about cases which, if a visa application had been made in Accra, would never have encountered difficulties.

The statistics prove that the accusation of racism is wholly false. It is because of the refusals that many of the new arrangements have had to be introduced. The refusals for entry during the six months to May 1986 had risen to 1,591—up 70 per cent.—for India; 971—up 38 per cent. —for Pakistan; 527—up 58 per cent.—for Bangladesh; 2,163—up 105 per cent.—for Nigeria; and 791—up 38 per cent.—for Ghana. Overall, that is a 68 per cent. increase in refusals, which must be a problem for the Home Office and for those working at Heathrow. By comparison, the refusals for Australia and Canada, using the same criteria, were 69 and 63 respectively. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that if the refusals for Canada, America or Australia rose by the same proportion as those for Ghana or Nigeria, the same requirements would be made of them as are being made of the five Commonwealth countries in question.

There are many aspects of the problem that people do not get up and speak about because they are afraid of being accused of being racialist. Many people want Britain to remain as Britain—they do not want it altered by a vast immigration factor. From the debate tonight it is clear that this country can have no assurance that if the Labour party were returned to power, immigrants would not flood into this country. That is the problem that we must face.

10.23 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): During a number of debates, I have, where appropriate, attempted to document the economic reasons why former Governments, especially Tory Governments in the 1950s, encouraged immigration to provide cheap labour for employers and industrialists. There is not time tonight to develop those points again, but it is necessary to state clearly that over the period that the British capitalist economy has declined from the illusion of the booms of the 1950s and 1960s to the realities of the recessions and slumps of the 1970s and 1980s, the very same Tory politicians, including the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), have changed their position. Now, together with the gutter press of this country, they are carrying out a relentless campaign, especially among the unemployed, the elderly and those in receipt of supplementary benefits, to portray black people as the cause of the increase in social problems through talk of floods of immigrants. Chief among them has been the Prime Minister who, on "World in Action" on 30 January 1978, said:

> "People are rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture."

This evening, we are witnessing how that same reactionary campaign has been continued over the past few weeks. On 16 October, the *Daily Star* spoke of "4,000 would-be immigrants" at Heathrow airport. On 21 October it also spoke of

> "millions of immigrants who have received succour and comfort in our land . . . Britain finally began to drop the portcullis and raise the drawbridge against the alien hoards . . . the human tidal wave."

On 14 October, the *Daily Mail* spoke about

> "A flood of immigrants trying to beat a Government crackdown".

On 15 October, under one-inch headlines, "Asian flood swamps airport", the *Daily Express* said:

> "Heathrow airport was under seige early today after a mass invasion of illegal immigrants".

In addition to those journalists, if that is not too generous a description of them in view of the jobs that they carry out on those newspapers, there have to be added the news agencies that put out stories to every local newspaper

talking about "floods of immigrants" at Heathrow airport. Those stories were reproduced in many local papers, including mine, the Coventry *Evening Telegraph*.

These people were not immigrants but tourists, mothers coming to see daughters give birth, sons coming to bury fathers. But the Government decision has introduced apartheid into tourism, enforced by Douglas Botha. The irony of that clear and open racism is the unfortunate ability of the Home Secretary to demonstrate that the origins of much of that legislation stem from former periods of Labour Governments. I hope that that never happens again.

Whatever the excuses being given by the Home Secretary, and his denials that the visa restrictions were against tourists from the Indian subcontinent for any racist reason, those inflammatory headlines and reports by the daily press have given a direct provocation to racism. Within a couple of days of those headlines appearing in the gutter press we saw an Asian newsagent's shop in Hackney being attacked and the words "3,000 more" daubed across the front of the shop. The same deliberate and calculated mood is being engendered up and down the rest of the country.

Working people can draw only one conclusion from that experience. It is that the Tory Government, just as Churchill 60 or 70 years ago played the Orange card to divide the working people in Northern Ireland, are beginning to play the black card, the racist card, to sow dissension among working people in the run-up to the general election.

What was the reality of the conditions facing working people at Heathrow? The Tory press would have us believe that everybody was put in £60-a-night, four-star luxury hotels. Perhaps one or two stayed in such accommodation but the truth is that for hundreds of Asian families there was chaos, misery and frustration. They were virtually imprisoned, waiting for days on floors at Heathrow to meet relatives. Many visitors and tourists were put into detention centres and even police cells.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is a constituent of mine, for giving way. In view of the racist filth that one sees on the front page of *The Sun*, will my hon. Friend join me in suggesting that all Asian newsagents should refuse to sell the stuff?

Mr. Nellist: I have had the honour of being asked to address a mass meeting of Kent miners and Wapping strikers tomorrow and I shall make that point to those workers, to illustrate, apart from the nature of the dispute at Wapping, the reason why *The Sun*, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and the *News of the World*, all the papers of Murdoch's empire, should be boycotted by working people.

The siege at Heathrow two weeks ago was reminiscent of a refugee camp. Frustrated and justifiably angry relatives were denied information. Some of them were herded 10 at a time, like prisoners, to go to the toilet. In a small way, I experienced that frustration by making numerous and largely fruitless telephone calls to the Home Office on these people's behalf. On their behalf this evening, I demand of the Minister that he announces the terms of compensation for their loss of earnings, for their trouble, for their accommodation and for the division of so many families that occurred for days and for weeks at Heathrow during this episode.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Nellist: I am sorry, I must continue.

There were forcible removals from Heathrow. A family from Essex has told of a brother-in-law who was told by immigration officers that he was being given entry, and was to be taken with 45 other visitors from Bangladesh to the arrival hall in a bus. The bus was instead driven on to the tarmac where immigration and police officers forcibly put these people on an aircraft that was flying to Dhaka.

This evening we have heard an attempt to justify the Government's action by citing numbers. Let us consider the numbers briefly. In 1985, 8·5 million visitors came to this country and 18,000 were refused entry. That is one in 474. The Home Secretary has talked of periodic upsurges in the numbers, and there has been a campaign by the Immigration Service Union deliberately to create periodic upsurges. There were 452,000 visitors from the five visa countries and even on the Home Secretary's statistics, only 222 did not return on the date that they said they would. As we know, the right hon. Gentleman uses the word "absconders". We are talking about one in 2,036 visitors, one twentieth of 1 per cent. It is a measure of Britain's decline that out of 8·5 million visitors from non-EEC countries and of 36 million passenger visitors in 1985, we are asked to take the action that the Government propose because 222 did not return on the date when they said that they would do so. It cannot be seen as anything but a racist decision. Not one Tory Member, and certainly no one on the Treasury Bench, has talked about the 200 million EEC nationals who could come to Britain tomorrow morning. No visa restrictions are being proposed for them.

Mr. John Whitfield (Dewsbury): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Nellist: No, I cannot give way.

Instead, £40 million is promised to be spent on 50 officials being sent to the five visa countries. If 50 officials work 48 weeks of the year on a five-day week for eight hours a day, they will be expected to deal with one of these applications every 13 minutes. That is laughable. There will be immense delays for the families that are waiting in Dhaka, Delhi and the other places of application for visas to come to Britain. If there is £14 million kicking around in the Treasury, it would be far better to replace the 1,000 uniformed Customs officials who have disappeared under this Government and conduct a serious war against the illegal importation of drugs and the drug abuse that is taking place among young people.

The measure that is before us reduces the rights of Members effectively to represent their constituents and their interests. In many instances our power to stop is the only hope that families have for a review to take place of the ECO's decision. How will families in Coventry be able to challenge the decisions that are made in Delhi or Dhaka for example, not to issue a visa because of alleged discrepancies between the statements of potential visitors and sponsors? These decisions will be made when they are 6,000 or 8,000 miles apart.

An editorial in *The Guardian* 11 days ago adequately described the difficulties that will be faced by my constituents' families. The article states:

"Earlier this year, the Guardian sent one of its own reporters, David Rose, to live and work with our immigration men in Bangladesh for a while. It wasn't, he found, like queuing for a US visa in Grosvenor Square. To the contrary, it was a battered, inevitably cynical mess. 'We don't send our

[Mr. Nellist]

best people to Dhaka,' said an FO mandarin in Whitehall. Most of the Foreign Office staff came directly from Grade 10, the lowest clerical level. The secretarial back-up was pathetically inadequate, the job itself pulverisingly arduous. Endless travel, endless queues—around 12,000 long; endless waits and—in a land where paperwork is naturally scanty—judgments which time and again, could be based on no more than whether the supplicant immigrant seemed 'shifty' or not.

Does anybody in their right mind wonder that when HMG grandly proclaims that all Bangladeshis seeking to come to Britain — whether as tourists or to join their (British) families living here—there's a rush to beat the ban?"

Reasons such as those are why we oppose the restriction of Members' rights of representation.

This evening the Home Secretary repeatedly attempted to reject the charge of racism, but not once did he attempt to condemn the racist articles in the Tory press quoted by Labour Members. Is he aware of the attitude of some Heathrow immigration officers? According to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants:

"After the visa announcement was made, the head of the Immigration Service, Peter Tompkins, wrote to all immigration officers. He thanked them for collecting the statistics which had 'enabled' the visa announcement to be made. That is not the language, nor are those the actions, of neutral civil servants, still less of people committed to providing a service to assist black people visiting Britain and to ensure family visits for people whose home is here."

The Home Secretary has not refuted the increasingly racial bias shown by members of the Immigration Service Union in their decisions at ports of entry. Whereas in 1983, 21 Indian visitors for every one Canadian were refused entry, in the first quarter of this year, 54 passengers from India for every one Canadian were refused entry. Between 1983 and 1985, passenger traffic increased by 20 per cent. but the staff of the Immigration Service increased by only 4 per cent. Far better to tackle those problems than to spend £14 million in five visa countries.

Mr. Whitfield: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nellist: No, I have nearly finished.

The biggest increase in refusals from the five visa countries began only after the Immigration Service Union officials met the Minister of State last year demanding curtailment of Members' rights of representation. The statistics cited by the Home Office come from there.

I end as I began, with a general point about the effect of the imposition of the rules. The justification of the press and the Tories inside and outside the Chamber and of their friends in further Right organisations in British society is that Britain is a small, overpopulated island which cannot cope with more immigrants. What are the facts? From 1973 to 1982, 2·27 million people left this country; only 1·8 million came in. The population therefore decreased by 430,000. Despite that decrease, unemployment increased over the same period from 531,000 in 1973 to 3,167,000 in 1983.

Unemployment, poor housing and declining social services are not caused by the number of immigrants. Indeed, black and Asian families often suffer the worst from these problems. I look forward to a Labour Administration that will repeal all the racist legislation passed in the past seven years and abolish the 1971 and 1981 immigration and nationality legislation. Above all, I look forward to a campaign on and explanation of the immigration issue, to explode all the Tory lies that surround it and to explain how society needs a transformation along Socialist lines so that a programme of a full employment, decent housing, education and welfare provisions can be created for all in society and, by ending capitalist society, that disease of which racism is a symptom can be put in the dustbin of history for ever.

10.38 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I add my tribute, as I have done in previous speeches—although it is no less sincere for that—to the private office of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. Like other hon. Members, I deeply appreciate the officials' assistance and courtesy. I pay tribute also, as I am glad one of my hon. Friends has done, to the immigration officers. I have visited terminals 3 and 4 on three occasions. The officers were extremely courteous in showing me all the facilities available. They were courteous and helpful when I spoke to them on the telephone about individual cases. One should always bear in mind that they are working people.

We are assessing the effect that the rules will have on the balance between the right of visitors to come to this country and of our constituents to invite them, and the rights of the community to be protected against people coming to this country who are not entitled to come here and are not entitled to settle. As we are not changing the eligibility rules, one has to assess whether the new procedures affect those rights in any way.

If we look at the old system, we realise that anyone arriving in this country after a long flight from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh faces a long delay at the first point of passport control as people in front are questioned because the immigration officer is suspicious and they are suspected of not being bona fide. They then possibly face a secondary interview in cramped facilities, possibly having to wait for some time simply because there may be a discrepancy on their passport or for some other reason. They may then face detention in not very luxurious accommodation, and having visited Harmondsworth I can vouch for that. Even at that stage they face having wasted a lifetime, or many years, of savings on an air fare by being returned home.

Apart from all the inconvenience that a visitor may face under the old system, there is also the anxiety of the sponsors who, days or weeks before, contact their Member of Parliament because they are anxious about the fate of their visitor. The sponsor waits on the other side of immigration control wondering where his visitor is because he has not heard anything, and he phones his Member of Parliament at all hours of the day and night to find out what is going on.

If that system was just being proposed it would not even see the light of day. It would be ruled out as hopelessly inefficient, of no benefit to anybody and one which even the EEC Commission would not dream of. Under the new system, there is an application from a visitor, by post in most cases, or possibly by a visit. The evidence of applications that have been received so far overseas shows that the majority have been turned round in the same day. Any discrepancy that occurs is dealt with before people leave home.

People have mentioned the difficulty of contacting supporters to back up stories. Most of the evidence that visitors need to prove that they are genuine comes not from a sponsor within Britain, but from their friends and relatives in the villages of their own country. Therefore, if

there is any discrepancy it is much better for them to sort it out in their own country, where they can get people to write in support of them or go to the British post overseas to help sort out any muddle that may occur. Any discrepancy that does occur is much better discovered in the comfort of their own home than in an overcrowded waiting room at Heathrow, and much better discovered before the money, which can be ill afforded, is squandered on an air fare and before they suffer the indignity of having to spend several nights in Harmondsworth. Instead, they can look forward to a smooth entry once they arrive at Heathrow straight into the welcoming embrace of their sponsor, who knows that they will arrive at the time they state.

On behalf of the large number of my constituents who will be affected, I have looked at the new system in the light of all the accusations that are being made. It is difficult to find anything that is restrictive in the new system. I find nothing that is discriminatory and nothing that is anything but of benefit to my constituents. Certainly the evidence that I have managed to collect so far shows that in the first week over 3,000 applications were received in India. Of those, fewer than 1 per cent. were refused entry and the vast majority were turned round in the same day. In Pakistan about 1,200 applications have been received and only 2 per cent. have been refused. In India the figure is less than the refusal rate at Heathrow, and in Pakistan it is the same. It proves that the system, certainly in its early stages, is working to great benefit. It is no wonder that yesterday, when I deliberately spent the whole day with my Asian community in an attempt to explain the visa system, I found that once I had explained it the system received a warm reception. One Sikh in the Gudwara said that it was the best thing that the Government had done.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Perhaps he will send the hon. Gentleman a Christmas card.

Mr. Lawler: The hon. Gentleman should know better. Sikhs do not observe Christmas. However, they do send me Eid cards.

Through its knee-jerk reaction to the proposal, the Labour party is supporting a system under which the majority suffer because of the minority who abuse that system, rather than supporting a new system which benefits the majority while at the same time severely curtails the opportunities for people to abuse the system by entering illegally.

It does not matter how many officers are installed at Heathrow. Obviously there is a limit to the physical capacity at the airport. Even if the number of officers is doubled or trebled, people will still be detained, there will still be wasted air fares, and there will still be questioning and delays. People will still undertake long flights and then have to submit to questioning, in poor circumstances. It is surely preferable that people know, when they apply for and receive a visa, that they will arrive on time at their destination, whether they apply to come to Brixton, Birmingham or Bradford. It is surely better that they know before they set off that they will arrive than to arrive not knowing whether they will reach their final destination.

Of course I found concerns among the Asian community in Bradford. Some of the anxieties arose from deliberate rumours and scares put round by those who, on political grounds, oppose the new proposal. Opposition Members have been very good at waving newspapers around tonight, and I join in the condemnation of some of the language in those newspapers. However, I can also quote from newspapers. An hon. Member is quoted in the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* as saying:

> "Bradford families would have to endure heartbreaking waits of up to 25 months for relatives to join them for short stays."

That is the kind of scare that has caused concern in the Asian community in Bradford.

I have also heard about a letter that is circulating in the Bangladeshi community in Bradford that is causing concern. That letter, too, is signed by an hon. Member. I have had the letter translated twice to confirm that its contents are accurate. I cannot speak Bengali, but I have been assured by those who speak Bengali that the translation is accurate. The letter says something to the effect that if someone is visiting Bangladesh and is resident in the United Kingdom, he must get a visa from Dhaka before he can return to the United Kingdom. That is the kind of scare that is worrying people in Bradford. The letter ends "Racists out, racists out." However, the language is ambiguous and could be translated as "Racists die now." Even I would not attribute that remark to the hon. Gentleman who signed the letter, as I know that he is against capital punishment. I gather that that part of the letter may have gained something in the translation.

Those are the scares circulating in the community in Bradford. It is no wonder that people panicked and came here at short notice and that there was chaos at Heathrow. Many of the genuine visitors who were caught up in that chaos can blame the Labour party for panicking them into arriving when they did. The Labour party must take much of the responsibility for that chaos.

I have two other points of concern to which I hope my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will respond. For those who are refused entry the current waiting time for appeal hearings for entry clearance refusals is nine or 12 months. That is no good if a visitor is applying for entry to attend a wedding that is to take place in two months' time. The purpose of the visit in that case will have disappeared. I hope that my right hon. Friend will review the appeals procedure and make it speedier for those refused visas for visits.

I also completely endorse the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), who referred to those people arriving at ports of entry who still do not need a visa. He said that there should be some instant form of appeal. That would be a good substitute for the right of hon. Members to have the facility to stop the removal of people. That right puts Members of Parliament in an invidious position. It is also unfair in that it discriminates between two people on the same flight—one person who knows how the system works and how to contact a Member of Parliament, and the person on the next seat who does not. It is not a matter of knowing one's rights, but of who one knows and what one knows. There is universal agreement among bodies such as UKIAS and JCWI that the right should be removed because it is discriminatory. There is no case for Members of Parliament retaining such a right or for maintaining an unfair system, especially if there can be a right of instant appeal instead.

The adjective "racist" has been bandied about much tonight. That reveals a lack of understanding of what the word means, and it adversely affects the cause of racial

[Mr. Lawler]

harmony. If everthing that the Government do to control the flow of people is called racist, the seriousness of the word is undermined. There is enough genuine racism. There is racism in employment and in housing and, at its worst, it manifests in itself in racial attacks. My constituents suffer from that as much as any other people with black or brown skin. Using the word in a general sense, as it has been used today, undermines its importance and creates a backlash in the majority white population, who get fed up with everything that affects the ethnic minority being labelled as racist. People who are genuinely trying to fight racism find that they are hindered because the word is abused by Opposition Members.

It is the Opposition, not the Government, who are on the defensive tonight. It is the Opposition who have panicked the ethnic minorities. As has happened often in the past, they have tried cynically to manipulate the ethnic minorities for their own political ends. I have news for them. Members of the ethnic minorities will not have their votes taken for granted by the Labour party. They are fed up with being cynically manipulated. The new system will benefit the vast majority of genuine visitors. As that fact comes to light during the next few months, the Labour party will be brought to account for the scares and rumours that it has spread to frighten my constituents.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have often ruled that it is out of order for an hon. Member to call another a liar because we are all hon. Gentlemans in this House and because that is one of the greatest abuses that one hon. Member can offer another. Surely the allegation, which has been made often by Opposition Members, that Conservative Members are racist is equally insulting and should therefore be ruled out of order. Could I have your guidance on that?

Mr. Speaker: If it was applied to an individual hon. Member, what the hon. Gentleman says would be correct, but while I have been in the Chair that has not been the case. Nevertheless, it is not a term that we should bandy about the Chamber.

10.54 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): This debate has covered three main issues: the disgraceful scenes at Heathrow airport two weeks ago; the Government's policy in deciding to impose visa requirements on five countries; and the Government's renewed attempt to take away from hon. Members the right to act on behalf of our constituents when they experience difficulties at points of entry to this country.

The scenes at Heathrow airport were appalling, and I hold the Home Secretary directly responsible for them. Once the Government had announced their decision to impose visas, it was inevitable that people in other countries who had been planning their holidays here for some time would be afraid, quite understandably, that they might have difficulty in obtaining visas, or that at least they would be subjected to long delays. Therefore they did the most natural thing in the world. They reached this country for their holidays before the date of implementation of the scheme.

Immigration officers at Heathrow were perfectly aware that there would be a rush of people to beat the deadline. For some strange reason, the Home Secretary was unaware of it, and it seems to me that he did not care. After all, those who suffered—the tourists and their hosts—were not white. I wonder what people from other countries must have thought of all this if, by some chance, it happened to be passing through Heathrow airport on one of those days two weeks ago. Yet all those difficulties for people at Heathrow airport could have been prevented.

No information was given to advice agencies until the last minute. I was asked at meetings up and down the country what would be the position if those who are settled here wanted to go abroad on holiday and then come back. I could not give an answer. Furthermore, until the last minute our posts abroad were unable or did not try to inform people about the position. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a number of unscrupulous travel agents abroad tried to cash in. They, not Labour Members of Parliament, spread panic, with the result that people tried to get on aeroplanes to come here in order to beat the deadline.

On those critical days communications at Heathrow airport broke down. No information was given about what aeroplanes had arrived. Bangladesh Biman airline —whose normal practice is to issue information about its passenger lists—was told on the critical day that, for security reasons, it would not be allowed to give that information to those who were waiting. I never discovered why. Telephone calls to the immigration department were not answered.

Furthermore, the British Airports Authority was not warned by the Home Office of what was about to happen, although it was in the middle of refurbishing terminal 3. On the critical days, therefore, when the visa system was being introduced that part of the terminal building where people were waiting for their visitors to arrive had its telephones taken away. The refreshment facilities also disappeared because that department was being refurbished. That was hardly a sensible way to deal with a situation that many hon. Members think the Minister could clearly have anticipated.

I was asked to telephone the Home Office on the previous day — I believe it was 14 October — by a community worker at the airport, who explained just what the difficulties were for those on the other side of immigration control: those who live here and who were waiting for their guests.

Furthermore, parties of tourists from the Indian subcontinent came to Britain and then went on a trip abroad that was organised by a British travel agent. One party of visitors was taken abroad by Cosmos. When those visitors returned to Dover with the intention of going to Heathrow airport to fly back to India, they were refused admission. After many protests they were given temporary admission to return to Heathrow as part of their Cosmos tour and then fly back to India. What an absurdity; what a lack of foresight; what a lack of planning.

Some of my hon. Friends have already referred to the behaviour of the press. The BBC and Independent Radio News also talked about hundreds of immigrants, when they should have known that these people were not immigrants but visitors and tourists. Some reports in the press sounded very much like Conservative Central Office handouts. It was a sad day for the British press when the normal standards of journalistic integrity were thrown out of the window. Indeed, at least one newspaper should be charged with incitement to racial hatred for the way in

which it covered those scenes at Heathrow airport and what it imputed to some of the people waiting to come here.

The British papers encouraged a wave of hysteria and misunderstanding about what was going on. Is that what the Home Secretary wants to create in Britain? Why did only Labour Members tell our people the truth about what was happening? Why did Home Office Ministers keep quiet in the face of all the lies and misrepresentations from the newspapers?

I am using my words carefully when I say that many people in the Asian communities in Britain are afraid of and have been subjected to racial attacks. If there is to be an increase of such attacks—I sincerely hope that there will not be — the Home Office Ministers bear a responsibility for that.

Where do the press get the misleading stories from? Who was talking to the press about what was said to immigration officers at the airport by people who had arrived? Was it officials belonging to the Home Office? Was it immigration officers who, on those busy days, went out to give impromptu press conferences which built up the wave of hysteria? If that is the case we should like to know. The least that the Home Secretary could do would be to have an inquiry as to how officials working for him were so busy giving statements to the press about what, allegedly, was happening at the airport.

Let me deal with the issue of principle. I am still looking for the evidence on which the decision was based. Some figures have been quoted. Let me quote one or two more. In March to May 1985 some 63,380 visitors from the subcontinent arrived. In the same period in 1986 the figure had increased by just under 3 per cent. to 64,540. The initial refusals in 1985 were 1,056 and in 1986, 1,719, an increase of 62 per cent. in the refusal rate. In other words, taking the subcontinent as a whole, it went up for those three months from a refusal of one in 60 to one in 37. That compares with refusal rates of about one in 5,500 for Australia, one in over 7,000 for Cananda, one in 4,500 for the United States and one in some 800 against South Africa.

Why did the refusal rate increase so much? The Home Secretary would have us believe that the pattern of visitors changed from one year to the next. He would have us believe that different sorts of visitors began arriving. The other explanation seems to be that the immigration officers, either spontaneously or in concert, decided to increase the refusal rate. That would fit in with the express policies of the ISU. I put it to the Home Secretary that at the very least those two explanations have equal weight. I should have thought that the second carries more weight with an impartial observer.

Nobody disputes that the conditions at Heathrow airport at peak travel times can be congested. I went about four or five weeks ago, early in September, just after the visa plans had been announced but before much impact could be seen from them. I was at terminal 3 on a Saturday morning. At least half the desks were not occupied by immigration officers when people were coming in and the arrival building was congested. I asked the immigration officers why more were not on duty and I was told that that was a problem and all the other terminals were being telephoned for more officers. No other officers arrived, so people had to wait. The least that the Government could have done was to have enough officers at the airport.

The right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), who has experience of these matters, made an interesting point. He talked about the possibility of an appeals system at the airport — an interesting suggestion which we should develop. The total cost of the present appeals system is about £2·25 million, and adding a direct appeals system at the airport — something for which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has been arguing for some time — would not be all that costly.

Why do we oppose this visa scheme? First, it has been introduced for only five countries. Some hon. Members talked about India, but although the Indian Government had in mind only four or five countries from which terrorists might come to India, they applied it to all countries, at great cost to them. But they did it so that they would not be seen to be discriminatory in the way that this Government have been discriminatory. Our second criticism is that, so far, the scheme has been unnecessary. The Government have not demonstrated the need for it. The first step should have been the appointment of more immigration officers at Heathrow, and then we could have seen what was necessary thereafter. Thirdly, the scheme is incredibly costly. Fourthly, there is the fear — it is almost a certainty—that there will be a higher rate of refusals for visitors applying to posts on the subcontinent and in West Africa than is the case at Heathrow airport. More people will simply not get in.

We know from the evidence of people who have applied for visitor entry certificates on a voluntary basis that, worldwide, there has been a 50 per cent. success rate in appeals against refusals. That suggests astonishing lapses in the decisions that have been made at posts abroad. I cannot guarantee that the same figures would apply to the subcontinent, but at the very least it is likely.

If the Home Secretary believes that visas are such a good idea, why did he not encourage people on the subcontinent to obtain visas for tourism on a voluntary basis? We know that officers at the posts in the subcontinent—certainly in Bangladesh—have said that they are too busy to do this sort of thing. They say, "Do not bother. Just go to Heathrow airport and take your chance." That has been the story for years. The Home Secretary should have done that if he had wanted his arguments to carry any weight.

We are worried that there will be delays in issuing visas and delays in the appeals system, which will strike hard at people coming here for urgent compassionate reasons. There will be 12 extra entry certificate officers in India to deal with tourist applications. That suggests that they will have to process 70 applications a day. The Home Secretary said, "Some of the applications will come in by post." If he is so concerned about the way in which visitors are dealt with, surely a face-to-face interview at Heathrow airport is a better check on the bona fides than dealing with applicants by post. In the end, not many will be dealt with by post.

Of course, there is a knock-on effect. If people are supposed to be dealing with 70 applications a day—we know that that is impossible—what will happen? Staff dealing with the settlement queues will be taken away and asked to deal with the tourists, which will mean even longer delays for people wishing to settle here. The proposals are clearly discriminatory in intent, and they will be discriminatory in their effect.

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

The Government tried in the past to remove hon. Members' rights to make representations, and we have resisted that. Now the Government argue that visas make the stop procedure unnecessary. Of course, pressure on the airlines will mean that not that many people will arrive from those countries without visas. Nevertheless, there will be some. Let me give examples showing why the right for hon. Members to retain the stop facility will still be important. The first example is where the visa holder is refused entry. The Home Secretary will say that there is a right of appeal, but we need the right to intervene when a visa holder has been stopped so that we can at least argue that he should be released from detention. There is no guarantee that the visa holder will not be held at Harmondsworth while the matter is resolved through the appeal system.

Secondly, there may be doubts about the nationality of the person. A person may arrive with dual nationality and may well wish to claim his other nationality in order to be allowed in from a country to which visas do not apply. Thirdly, somebody may arrive who is ill and who cannot be sent back. Fourthly, it is just possible that young children may arrive and it would be quite unacceptable for them to be sent halfway across the world in order to apply for a visa. There may be urgent compassionate reasons why somebody should be admitted—perhaps because of an impending funeral. It may well be that the person wishes to claim refugee status but has nevertheless been refused entry by an immigration officer at Heathrow airport.

Lastly, what about residents returning here who for some reason have failed to get their visa exemption stamp? Are they to be sent back halfway across the world to apply for the stamp somewhere else? For these and other reasons it would be a denial of justice to take away from us the right to act on behalf of our constituents and the people that they wish to have visit them. I have to make it clear yet again, because Government Members do not wish to listen, that, in government, the Labour party will continue to exercise firm immigration control. *[Interruption.]* As the Home Secretary does not appear to be listening, I shall repeat the point. The Labour party in government will exercise firm immigration control, but we shall repeal the legislation and replace it with non-racially discriminatory measures. Can I make it clearer than that to the Home Secretary?

This debate is not about immigration: it is about the right of people to come here on holiday and about the rights of our constituents to be visited by their friends and relatives. The Government's proposals are racially discriminatory because they are saying that black tourists are less welcome than white tourists. We shall welcome all who want to spend a holiday here and that is why we shall vote against the Government.

11.13 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): On 15 October the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), commenting on the flood of arrivals during the previous two or three days, said:

"They are simply tourists. The imposition of visas has nothing to do with immigration controls, but restriction on tourists."

In the debate those words were echoed by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). This was after thousands of people from the Indian subcontinent had flooded into Heathrow in every possible way. They came direct from the Indian subcontinent, by Kuwait Airways, Gulf Air, Egyptian Airlines, Thai Airlines, Malaysian Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Air Canada, Quantas and Aeroflot. Many people might conclude that when a visa requirement is announced people do not rush to get into a country by any means, nor that they normally take off suddenly and decide to travel thousands of miles to visit relatives with whom perhaps they have not had any contact for years. They do not do such things unless they feel that if they delay and if their claims to enter as visitors are carefully examined abroad, they will not pass the test.

Ms. Clare Short *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: Therefore, they feel they had better try while the going is good. What happened in those last few days may be said to go a long way towards proving the case for visas. It is absolutely absurd to criticise the Government and the immigration service for having difficulties in dealing with that influx in the circumstances in which it occurred.

What happened on 12, 13 and 14 October was not an entirely new phenomenon. It was only an intensification of what our staff had to cope with throughout the summer. There had been an enormous rush of Nigerians seeking entry in July—1000 arriving on one day and 3,000 in a week. What happened in October was only an intensification of what happened between July and October 1985, when 1,006 Bangladeshis arrived at terminal 3, many of them young men claiming to be business men, carrying kits of bogus documents to substantiate that claim.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: If Labour Members are not prepared to face up to those uncomfortable facts, they are not fit to be a party in government.

The right hon. Member for Gorton and the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) said that the troubles on 12, 13 and 14 October could have been avoided if only there had been more staff. I remind them that staffing has been increased year on year since 1979. The 1986 figures show that there are 90 more immigration officials in post in 1986 than in 1985. Between 12 and 20 additional staff were on duty at terminal 3 until 14 October and on 14 October no fewer than 54 additional staff were in post. Even so, they could not cope, for obvious reasons, as any sensible person could recognise.

The problem facing immigration control over the past year could not have been solved by extra staffing. There is insufficient detention accommodation — *[Laughter.]* Right hon. and hon. Gentlemen are now saying that every person who arrived at Heathrow at the beginning of October should have been let into the country, although they could not make out their application to enter as visitors. In this case our claim is fully substantiated, but right hon. and hon. Gentlemen want a weakening of immigration control. It is pure humbug of right hon. and hon. Gentlemen to pretend that a Labour Government would maintain firm immigration control. That has been proved by their ridiculous mirth in the past few moments.

There has not been sufficient detention accommodation to deal with the large numbers who have arrived at

Heathrow and who have been unable to substantiate their claim to enter as visitors. They have been unable to show us that they are genuine visitors who have not intended to remain here either to work for a long period or for settlement.

We do not have the secondary examination accommodation. Any hon. Member who has been to Heathrow knows that to be the case. There is not space in terminal 3 for us to interview more people than are being interviewed at present. Clearly, when they are first seen by an officer at the desk their claim to enter is at least in doubt. So it is not just a question of putting things right by having more immigration officers. It cannot be done in that way and I do not believe that any Opposition Members who have studied the problem really believe that it can be dealt with by putting more immigration officers in post.

Then there is the ridiculous charge of racism, made by the right hon. Member for Gorton and rebutted admirably and sensibly by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). It is an absurd claim. Indeed, it is as absurd as such a charge would have been in 1969, although it is clear that the change made then was aimed at people coming from the Indian subcontinent and not at people coming from Australia. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) said on that occasion that the difficulty was

"the great majority of dependants from India and Pakistan make no use of the entry certificate procedure."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1969; Vol. 783, c. 1793.]

and, therefore, he was faced with an enormous problem. Labour Members may be interested to know that that was the first time in an immigration debate that a Minister spoke about a "flood" of immigrants.

Surely the whole matter was put in proportion by the Prime Minister of Nigeria who said on 3 September:

"Visas are a technical and administrative matter. It is not a political decision."

He was entirely right. He recognised that it is for every individual country to decide how best to operate the mechanism of immigration control and that if we felt it right to use the mechanism of visa control we were perfectly entitled to do it, in order to weed out genuine tourists from those who are pretending to be tourists.

We have never imposed visas on the basis of colour. Before these changes—*[Interruption.]* I wish that hon. Members would listen, because they might then not go out of the Chamber as ignorant as they were when they came in. I remind hon. Members that before this visa requirement was introduced, visas were required from citizens of Poland, China, the Congo and Burma. I make that white, yellow, black and brown.

Some people say that we should have imposed visas on other countries, just to demonstrate that there is no racism in our decision. That suggestion was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), but it would be absurd to impose visas on countries where it is not necessary to have a visa regime, merely to avoid completely unwarranted charges of racism. There is no point in swimming along with the tide and accepting the validity of arguments about racism when a moment's examination of the facts will show that they are utter rubbish.

As for hon. Members' representations, I remind the House that we are talking about the present right of hon. Members to intervene to stop a removal. We are not talking about taking away from hon. Members the right to make representations in immigration cases. It is, therefore, not correct to say, as the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) said, that he will be deprived of the right to intercede on behalf of his constituents. That is simply not the case.

In visitor cases hon. Members ask for stops because they are questioning the judgment of the immigration officer that the individual concerned is not a genuine visitor and they want me to look at the case and review the officer's decision. But now, in the case of a visa national arriving without a visa, there will normally be nothing for me to look into, so the justification for that system disappears.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) was kind enough to congratulate members of my private office on their work. I shall pass that on to them. He said that sufficient resources were not being provided for the Indian subcontinent to deal with the new regime. That is not correct because 31 additional staff are going to the Indian subcontinent and Ghana, and 26 are now in place. The rest will be there by the end of the week. It is clear from what my right hon. Friend said that the new regime is settling down and working well.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) pointed out the obvious—that there is far more pressure to get into this country illegally from some countries than from others. It is therefore scarcely surprising that there is a difference between refusal rates among nationals of some countries as compared with others.

My right hon. Friend said that he could see positive advantages in having same-day appeals for those refused entry. However, that must be a long way off because it would require primary legislation. Other countries have learnt from experience that it is easy to give a person an immediate right of appeal and to allow that person into the country, but that it is easy for that person thereafter to use every possible legal device to stay.

The hon. Member for Rochdale said that no case of his had been overruled. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave a vivid illustration of a case in which he overruled a decision by an immigration officer. It should be a salutary lesson to all Opposition Members who have been so willing to talk of massive abuse even when the total number of those who disappear is small compared with the total number of passengers. How can one say that there is not massive abuse if 201 performers arrive, 138 are granted leave and 103 disappear? Nobody but a fool would say that there is not massive abuse.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North not only suggested that it might be a good idea to have visas for all, but asked me whether we intended to extend the visa regime further. The answer to that must be no. However, the duty of any Government is to keep immigration control under continuing review and to react appropriately according to circumstances. That is precisely what we are doing tonight.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West said, surprisingly, that it would be better to maintain the present system and to make the decisions here because those decisions could be made more cheaply. Decisions are not made more cheaply if the decisions are erroneous because of the pressure upon the immigration service at the port of entry. Nobody can doubt that in those last few days before the visa regime was introduced people were

[Mr. Waddington]

admitted to this country who, in normal circumstances, would not have qualified under the immigration rules. That was an inevitable consequence of enormous pressure.

One or two matters of great importance have emerged during the debate. We have heard from the right hon. Member for Gorton that Labour would remove the visa requirement if returned to power. One cannot imagine a more irresponsible pledge. It is pledge to restore to Heathrow all the troubles, dislocation and inconvenience to the bona fide travellers, not least those from the Indian subcontinent, who form the vast majority. It is a pledge to restore the dislocation from which we are now escaping.

Labour would do all that at the same time as repealing the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981 — the twin pillars upon which the whole of our immigration control is based. It would do so at the same time as it was charging the immigration officers to relax procedures, within an hour of taking office. That is what the right hon. Gentleman wants to do.

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 179, Noes 260.

Division No. 297] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry

Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Staml'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Squire, Robin
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wall, Sir Patrick
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Haemodialysis Patients (Attendance Allowance)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): It is a pleasure to introduce this Adjournment debate, and I begin by congratulating my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) on his appointment as Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. I gather that this is the first Adjournment debate to which he will reply, and I hope that it is the first of many. May they all be at this somewhat reasonable hour.

I welcome the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the case of Roland Read of the town of Totton in my constituency. Roland Read is 18 years old and suffers from Allport's syndrome, which affects kidney function and necessitates him receiving kidney dialysis twice a week. Last year, Roland received a kidney transplant which, sadly, was unsuccessful, and his dialysis treatment continues.

Roland is being treated as an out-patient at a pioneering unit at St. Mary's hospital, Portsmouth, under Professor H. A. Lee. Roland is a self-care patient—he uses the dialysis machine at the Meon 5 ward at St. Mary's out of hospital hours, without the assistance of trained nursing personnel. The only help Roland receives is from his mother, who accompanies him, prepares him for the dialysis and cleans the machine ready for the next patient. Medical assistance is not available from members of staff on-site but must be summoned if necessary by telephone, as if the patient were dialysing in his own home. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) is in the Chamber at this well-attended Adjournment debate because I know that he has a constituent who is also a self-care patient at St. Mary's hospital. I think that he will have something to add to this debate when I have concluded my remarks.

It is because Roland's treatment takes place in the precincts of a hospital that I specially raise his case, as the setting-up of the unit at St Mary's post-dates the Social Security Act 1979 under which Mrs. Read, Roland's mother, attempted without success to claim an attendance allowance for his care. The regulations governing the payment of attendance allowance stem from section 35(1) of the Social Security Act 1975. That Act was widened in 1979 by Statutory Instrument 1979/375 to include persons suffering from renal failure, treated regularly for dialysis for two or more sessions a week, provided they satisfied the prescribed conditions. Patients carrying out home dialysis can qualify for an attendance allowance, although not all do. Regulation 5c specifically excludes any patient dialysing as an NHS out-patient. But what is an out-patient?

At that time, no patient receiving dialysis in hospital would have done so without the direct supervision of a member of staff. The so-called self-care treatment pioneered by the Wessex regional authority, which covers both my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North, and organised by the unit at St. Mary's is something entirely new. Patients such as my constituent are in an anomalous situation because of the novel methods of treatment they are receiving.

St. Mary's hospital has an active transplant programme and self-care is seen as a new option for kidney patients. Eight patients are using self-care facilities at the hospital, but within the Wessex regional health authority, there are already units at Basingstoke and at St. Leonard's in Ringwood.

The unit at Ringwood was set up at a capital cost of £42,500 and has the facilities to dialyse 12 patients a week. That capital cost compares favourably with the cost of installing home dialysis equipment, which is confined to the use of one patient only, while the hospital units are available for multiple use. I understand that the cost of installing dialysis equipment at a patient's home, using a portakabin specially adapted for the purpose, is around £1,000 merely to lift the portakabin into place, notwithstanding the cost of the equipment itself. Of course, it would cost another £1,000 to lift the portakabin out of the home if the patient received a successful transplant and no longer needed dialysis. That is not to decry this country's excellent record in providing home dialysis facilities, whereby over half the patients receiving dialysis treatment do so within their own home.

The self-care treatment available within Hampshire could well help relieve the pressure on dialysis facilities and allow an increasing number of patients to be treated. We have yet to get the final figures for 1985, but it appears that the number of new kidney patients treated last year rose from 35 to about 40 per million. That is an excellent record, but there is still room for improvement. In fact only last week my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), who I am also glad to see in the Chamber, was given leave to bring in a Bill

"to establish procedures for eliminating the waiting lists of patients who require kidney dialysis by contracting out the provision of such facilities."

He pointed out that experts have estimated that in England and Wales alone about 1,200 kidney patients are not being served by the dialysis or transplant programmes. I am sure that if the kind of treatment being offered at St. Mary's hospital, Portsmouth, and the other units is taken up elsewhere in the country not only could those kidney patients be served but, alas, there may also be an increasing number of patients such as Roland Read who are debarred from receiving an attendance allowance, despite the fact that they are carrying out exactly the kind of self-care they would perform in their own homes.

Only a small number of such patients are affected at present. A switch to that type of care could effectively penalise the carers. While patients are trained to be self-reliant and to operate the machine single-handedly, in practice most patients need the assistance of a helper. In Roland's case his mother drives him on the 60-mile round trip to the hospital and spends one and half hours preparing the machine. Roland then spends six hours on the machine with a further three quarters of an hour spent in cleaning the machine. That happens twice a week and on many occasions the couple do not get home until the small hours of the morning. It would be a great burden for a young person to undertake such treatment entirely alone.

The attendance allowance that is available to home dialysis patients would assist with the expenses incurred by self-care patients such as Roland, whose co-operation enables expensive National Health Service equipment to be used more frequently without additional staffing costs.

On 4 September 1986 our local paper, the *Southern Evening Echo*, said:

"They say the Lord and the system always helps those who help themselves and the more you give in life the more you get back.

But for an 18-year-old kidney victim and his mum, self-help was met with a well-aimed financial kick in the teeth from the State."

The article by Mr. Dermot Martin is tough-speaking but is probably true. It ends with a quotation from Professor Harry Lee, who is in charge of Roland's treatment. He did not mince words when he said:

"Those thickheads at the Ministry haven't realised yet that Mrs. Read is simply doing at the hospital what others are doing at home and getting financial help for. Our scheme here has full Government approval."

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister had these cases under review but I hope to seek his reassurance that the regulations may be amended so that self-care dialysis patients may qualify for an attendance allowance in the same way as do those who carry out home dialysis.

Following the article I have quoted, a letter was published in the *Southern Evening Echo*. It was entitled:

"Thanks a lot for such kindness".

The letter said:

"Roland and I wish to thank the two people who have anonymously sent us cash donations after reading in the Echo of our struggle to get an attendance allowance owing to Roland myself for doing self-care dialysis.

It is nice to know that somewhere some people care and their donations are gratefully received."

It is now up to the Minister to demonstrate that he too cares.

11.53 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): With the permission of the Chair and the agreement of my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), I should like to add a short rider to what my hon. Friend has said. In giving my full support to his comments I should like to relate what happened recently. A Portsmouth patient approached me to point out that self-dialysis patients do not have immediate access to trained help or assistance should they find the need. He told me that it takes well over 10 minutes for anyone to respond to a call from the dialysis unit to the hospital. At first I thought that that was the kind of exaggeration that people bring into such descriptions. However, when I raised the matter with the hospital authorities I was surprised to find that they agreed that there could be a delay of more than 10 minutes between the time a call was made and trained assistance being available.

The hospital authorities continued to claim two mitigating circumstances. First, they suggested that dialysis patients often help each other. If another patient was available, he would help the patient in difficulty. Secondly, the authorities stated—I am sure that this is true—that self-dialysis patients are very carefully trained before they are allowed to become self-dialysing. However, my point and the point which was stressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside, is that the regulation which suggests that a patient who is an out-patient at an hospital is not eligible for an attendance allowance was made when the assumption was that the patient going to the hospital had ready, early and immediate access to skilled help. If it is accepted by the hospital authorities in Portsmouth that there can be a gap of more than 10 minutes before help is available, the situation in the hospital dialysing unit is analagous to that in the patient's home. The rules regarding the attendance allowance ought to be the same.

11.56 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): With the consent of my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) I would like to make a brief contribution. I would like to support my hon. Friend's plea for help by way of attendance allowance for self-dialysing patients. I support the payment of the allowance, for two reasons. It releases expensive capital equipment to help others and it gives people the opportunity to lead a normal life. When one has to use a kidney machine twice or three times a week during the day, it is very difficult to hold down a job. That throws people on the state. If patients are able to use kidney machines at night—I commend the initiative in that respect—it will allow kidney patients to lead a normal life. For that reason I support my hon. Friend's plea this evening.

11.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on winning the ballot for the debate tonight. The amount of interest which it has caused and the reasonable hour at which it is being held are also grounds for congratulation.

It is a great pleasure to see my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) in his place, as he brings his great and personal knowledge to this subject which is important to so many people. I shall be glad to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside and to my hon. Friends the Members for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), and for Stockport (Mr. Favell).

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside for the clear way in which he set out the problems, which, as he recognises, arise from the happy development of scientific methods of treatment—developments which were not foreseen some years ago when the regulations were first devised, or in 1979 when they were altered to ease the position.

In the time available I shall set out the background, the new circumstances as described by my hon. Friends, the way in which we have approached the problem and how we seek to tackle it.

With regard to the background, renal failure, and the consequent need for dialysis, rightly command considerable sympathy from all of us. Dialysis techniques have, of course, improved over the years, together with surgical intervention with kidney transplants. Many thousands of people are now able to lead normal lives as a result. The introduction of continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis in particular has freed many dialysis patients from the need to use machines, and the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport about the need to dialyse at night was along those lines.

Of course, not all patients can make use of these techniques, and many still rely on haemodialysis machines and can spend up to six hours two or three times a week dialysing on one of the machines. About 4,000 people dialyse by machine. Around 2,000 of them have the machine installed at home once the hospital has trained them and a relative or friend in the machine's use. Emergency help is provided by the hospital should the equipment fail.

For the remaining 2,000, dialysis is undertaken in a hospital which the patient visits regularly for the purpose.

[Mr. Nicholas Lyell]

This may be because particular problems need expert supervision or because there is no scope in the home environment for installing the necessary equipment.

Expanding facilities for the treatment of end-stage renal failure is one of the Government's priorities and we have encouraged health authorities to experiment with a variety of new ways—of which this is one—of providing the service to make the best use of resources and to take account of patients' needs. There are now satellite dialysis units away from main renal units, some of them outside hospital premises, and we commend all of these imaginative initiatives and this flexible approach. My hon. Friend has told the House of another development this evening. The facilities in the main renal unit in Portsmouth and other locations he mentioned are now being used during the night on what is called a "self-care" basis although, within the hospital, we understand, there is no supervision by the hospital staff—the length of time to obtain service if the bell is rung is some indication of that —and the patient brings his own helper with him to help connect him to the equipment and later to disconnect and clean up, unaided or supervised by the hospital staff.

The House will see, therefore, that methods of dialysis are continually developing in an effort to match the needs of patients with the best possible use of resources. Portsmouth health authority has produced a novel approach within the hospital environment. It is, of course, early days, and I am sure that it will be monitoring the situation, as we hope to do, to see how it works out.

We are discussing this matter tonight because of the availability or otherwise of attendance allowance to those using dialysis equipment. Eligibility for attendance allowance depends, as one might expect, on one or more of the statutory conditions being satisfied. The conditions relate to frequent attention throughout the day or prolonged or repeated attention at night in connection with a person's boldily functions or, alternatively, to a need for continual supervision by day or night to avoid substantial danger to the person or someone else. Decisions about whether the conditions are satisfied are the responsibility of the independent attendance allowance board and of doctors delegated by them to make decisions on their behalf.

I have already indicated that dialysis techniques have improved over the years, and by 1979, the attendance allowance board found that haemodialysis in many cases no longer satisfied the criteria because the attention required was not frequent or prolonged and any supervision was not continual. I emphasise that this was not so in every case but in a substantial number of cases.

The Government were anxious to assist those using haemodialysis machines and we decided that, even though the then statutory conditions were not met, we would, exceptionally, treat them as satisfied. In consequence, regulations made in 1979, following an amendment to the Social Security Act 1975, deem those dialysing at home by machine at least twice a week during the course of which they need attention from another person to satisfy the conditions for a lower rate allowance.

The regulations made it clear, however, that those dialysing in hospital—herein lies the problem with the changed circumstances — as out-patients were not included in this deeming provision. This is in line with the underlying principle of attendance allowance that it is for those being cared for at home and if care is provided wholly or partly out of public funds, it is not payable. That, then, is the background to the case my hon. Friend has put so lucidly to us this evening. His constituent, Mr. Roland Read, was found by the attendance allowance board—rightly applying the present regulations—not to satisfy any of the conditions for attendance allowance, and the 1979 deeming provisions do not apply because the dialysis is carried out in hospital as an out-patient.

Portsmouth health authority, having set up its self-care units, has altered the picture. Here we have patients using hospital equipment within the hospital, but supported and supervised entirely by a relative or friend—in this case Mr. Read's mother—and I understand that no provision is made by the hospital for supervision.

The authority and the National Federation of Kidney Patients Associations have indicated that since this puts the patients in self-care units in a position analogous to those dialysing at home, they should not be regarded as hospital out-patients and attendance allowance should be payable. It will be clear, I hope, from what I have already said that this would require an amendment of the existing regulations. I have already told my hon. Friend in correspondence that we are looking carefully at the position to see whether it would be right to change the regulations.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that a person on a kidney dialysis machine is quite unable to move? Therefore, although the helper may not be doing anything, he is needed in case the patient gets the cramps in his limbs, which is extremely common, or if something goes wrong with the machine. The notion that the attendant puts a patient on the machine and then leaves is unrealistic.

A second point that is exercising the minds of some kidney patients—here I must declare an interest, as I am on kidney dialysis at home and receive an attendance allowance—is what their position will be when the new Social Security Act comes into force.

Mr. Lyell: I am very glad to answer both of my hon. Friend's points. I welcome the fact that he has emphasised that once one is on a machine—nobody will know that better in this House than my hon. Friend — one is unable to help oneself. That is one of the reasons why an attendance allowance should be payable to those at home. The inability to help oneself is common to dialysis both at home and in a hospital.

On my hon. Friend's second point about the effect of the changes that will be introduced by the Social Security Act 1986, I am very happy to make it abundantly clear that they will not affect the way in which attendance allowance is paid. It will most certainly continue to be paid after the changes come into effect, just as it is paid now.

We have commissioned a major study of both the number and the needs of disabled people generally. That study is now being conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. We shall be reviewing benefits for the disabled as a whole in the light of that study. We expect the results of the survey to be available in 1988, after which we shall review the whole picture in relation to the disabled. I emphasise that the changes to the 1986 Act will make no difference to the payment of the attendance allowance. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

I have already said that we shall look carefully at the point that has been raised by my hon. Friend the Member

for Romsey and Waterside and see whether it would be right to change the regulations. Although I cannot go further than that at the moment by way of a commitment, I can outline some of the positive steps that we shall be taking and some of the relevant aspects that will need to be examined.

The first positive step that we have in mind is that in the near future we propose to send a small team from the Department to the Portsmouth area to study the whole position, in consultation, among others, with Professor Lee. We are sure that that will help us, and we hope that it will help generally. We shall need to ascertain the precise criteria for a self-care unit. We must analyse the distinction between a patient in a self-care unit and an ordinary hospital out-patient. We must ask ourselves how far the absence of supervision by the hospital alters his status.

In that context we need, to some extent, to consider the legal aspects. The federation has expressed some concern about the hospitals' liability or otherwise should an emergency arise and their responsibility for a patient while on the hospital premises. The key question is whether there is a real distinction between the present case and those cases of dialysis in hospital as full out-patients.

At present we are concerned with only two comparatively small units and a third, as I understand it, in preparation. They have established a particular pattern, of which we have heard tonight, but which still concerns only a comparatively few people, important cases in themselves, but showing the way and therefore a way that we must analyse.

However, we must envisage, and we do, that other authorities may develop their own solutions to the problems of matching dialysis patients' needs to the best use of resources. We need to consider our options against a slightly wider background than just this particular case.

We are fully committed to providing attendance allowance to those renal failure patients who need attention at home while dialysing at least twice a week. We shall look carefully at the path which my hon. Friend advocates, but before we commit ourselves to go down it we need to be sure that it is the best solution in everyone's interests and the best use of resources. The position is not yet completely clear cut but we shall press ahead to give the matter our clear and constructive consideration.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 28 October 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Order For Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Books

1. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the provision of books in schools.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): My right hon. Friend has received no representations arising directly from HMI's report. However, since taking office he has discussed the supply of books for schools with the local authority associations.

Mr. Lofthouse: The Minister will be aware that the recent HMI report indicated that half the primary school lessons have been affected by the shortage of books. Is that not extremely serious, and what action has she taken since the publication of the report to rectify the matter?

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government need no convincing that spending on books is a priority, and we hope that our proposals for local authority spending in 1987-88 — which imply an increase of some 14 per cent. in planned expenditure on education—will resolve this matter.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree, however, that the provision of books is not necessarily the key necessity for effective education, otherwise one would have difficulty explaining the paltry results of the profligate ILEA? A perhaps more important part of the HMI report was the inadequacy with which children's educational needs were shown to be identified, together with the lack of management of resources.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is certainly true that inadequate capitation allowances were not considered to be the main factor contributing to poor provision. It was thought much more significant that poor management of resources and inadequate identification of pupils' needs by teachers were the main elements.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Does my hon. Friend accept that many parents are extremely concerned about the kind of books currently available in some schools? I refer in particular to sex education books such as "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin", "Taught not Caught" and "Make it Happy". Will my hon. Friend bring to the attention of the inspectorate the concern felt by parents throughout the country that some extremely unfortunate books that may corrupt our young children are now available in schools and libraries?

Mrs. Rumbold: Of course we condemn the use of irresponsible books and unsuitable literature in our schools. My hon. Friend will be aware that my right hon. Friend is taking action in respect of one of the authorities by sending in the inspectorate to see exactly what is happening.

Mr. Litherland: Is the Minister aware that the printing of short runs of books is wholly uneconomical as the bulk of capital expenditure takes place at the initial stage of the printing process? I suggest that she goes back to school and gets her sums right before depriving our children of essential facilities.

Mrs. Rumbold: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is aware that the local authorities have capitation allowances and sort out different allocations for individual schools. They look at both books and equipment, and it is their responsibility to look into that at the beginning of each financial year.

Higher Education

2. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about resources for higher education.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I receive a lot of representations. For local authority higher education I have already announced an increase in funding of £54 million next year. I hope to be able to make an announcement about university funding quite soon.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Secretary of State aware that, despite his optimistic speech last month about the future of university places, many vice-chancellors see nothing facing them but ever-increasing deficits, cuts in services, cuts in staff and possible cuts in departments? Will he comment on the confidential report published in some of yesterday's newspapers — based on information from the Treasury and his own Department — which indicated that the crisis facing the universities was even worse than had been publicly acknowledged so far?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman knows that in the cycle of funding each year polytechnics and colleges of further education are dealt with first. I announced a substantial increase of 8 per cent. for those. I hope to be able to announce the position for universities quite soon. I trust that they will not be too disappointed.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the funding of higher education cannot be separated from the broad education budget? Within that context, will he do all he can to see that the teachers' pay queries are settled at an early date, with a fair result for them? Will he also ensure that the children are put first in those negotiations, that they get a fair deal, and that schools are not disrupted?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a bit wide of the question.

Mr. Freud: In fighting for extra money for that important priority, will the Secretary of State ensure that access is widened so that those with genuine ability, even if they do not conform to the identikit picture of a student, have a chance of access to higher education?

Mr. Baker: I want to increase the participation rates of 16 to 18-year-olds. A total of 26 per cent. of those taking further education courses are 16 to 18-year olds. We expect the figure to go to 28 per cent. I want more young people to stay on at school until they are 18 and to go on to colleges, polytechnics and universities. Since 1979 there has been an increase of 140,000 in the number of full-time and part-time home students. That increase is one of which we can all be proud.

Mr. Forman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his positive approach to the future of higher education is welcome and that Conservative Members give him their full support in his endeavour to associate increased funding for higher education with greater selectivity and a better managerial approach?

Mr. Baker: I welcome my hon. Friend's support. I appreciate the importance of the universities, but I am always anxious to point out the equal importance of polytechnics. We should take pride in the fact that in 1986 the number of first-class degrees awarded in polytechnics is up by 20 per cent.

Mr. Radice: Does the Secretary of State not accept that the message of the report of the Government's own accounting advisers is that continual cuts in funding since 1981 are bringing many universities to the verge of bankruptcy? Is it not time that the Secretary of State told the Prime Minister that there must be a U-turn in policy? To maintain standards, the Government must provide universities with more resources.

Mr. Baker: Over the past few years, changes had to be made in universities. I think that all hon. Members would agree with that. A significant change in attitudes and in giving priorities to some subjects over others is pure gain. I ask the hon. Gentleman to await the announcement that I hope to make quite soon. I think that he will not be too disappointed.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what efforts the universities are making to attract outside funding from industry? Is the sum considerable, is it rising, or is it level?

Mr. Baker: I have been charged today in the columns of *The Times* with the fact that I suggested that universities were ivory towers and did not seek support from the private sector. The fact that I said that obviously hit a raw nerve. There has been an increase in private funding for universities over the past few years, and we all welcome that. The amount of private money that goes into universities amounts to just £47 million a year, which is well under 1 per cent. of their costs, and compares unfavourably with practices in America, Germany and France.

School Buildings

3. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the standard of maintenance of school buildings.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the standard of maintenance of school buildings.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received no representations specifically on HMI's findings, but has discussed the repair and maintenance of schools in meetings with the local authority associations and in the National Economic Development Council.

Mr. Davis: But how many representations does the Secretary of State need? Is it not enough to receive a report from Her Majesty's inspectors, who say that one fifth of all lessons in primary and secondary school are being adversely affected by being held in unsuitable and unsatisfactory accommodation, that the situation is getting worse, and that that is putting an unfair burden on teachers such as the staff at Gossey Lane school in Birmingham, who told me that they take a calculated risk of a child being seriously injured whenever they take a PE class in inadequate accommodation? In the face of such facts, in not the Minister's complacency verging on criminal negligence?

Mr. Dunn: I have to tell the hon. Gentleman, who has used unusually intemperate language in the House today, that I share the concern expressed by HMI, but I remind Opposition Members that the poor physical state of many school buildings has not suddenly occurred in the past 10 days. It is not a new event. It springs from the gradual effects of 20 years of neglect, and Opposition parties must take their fair share of responsibility for the present position.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware that capital allocations to the county of Cumbria are so low that the education service in parts of the county is now at the point of collapse? Is he aware that buildings are leaking, teachers are complaining, and that parents resent the Government and object to the cuts? Does the hon. Gentleman realise that secondary organisation in my constituency is being threatened by the inadequacy of buildings? Why does he not do something? Why does the Secretary of State not win an argument in Cabinet and get some more money for education so that we can have a decent system throughout the country, particularly in my constituency?

Mr. Dunn: We are concerned here with good housekeeping and planned maintenance programmes. Some local education authorities chose in the past not to follow such programmes, and I am sorry to say that the authorities which chose not do so are now reaping the consequences of their past inactivity.

Mr. Allan Howarth: Does my hon. Friend agree that some rather wasteful administrative procedures are in use for the maintenance of school buildings? Does he agree, for example, that when a boy or girl kicks a football through a window, if the head teacher were allowed to send a caretaker to the DIY shop and get him to mend the window on the spot, rather than have to wait for the arrival of the accredited team of window repairers from the local education authority offices, our schools would be better maintained, at appreciably lower costs?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend's question only reinforces my view that we were entirely right to include in the Education Bill that has jut left the House a degree of local financial management. Of course, local education authorities are free to build upon that and delegate much more than we require of them in law.

Mr. Lilley: Is my hon. Friend aware of the fine example set by the parents and staff of St. George's school, Harpenden in that respect, as they are half way through a five-year voluntary programme of repainting their own school? Did my hon. Friend read the article in *The Times Educational Supplement* praising them for that and saying that as well as releasing resources for a lower pupil-teacher ratio and better equipment, it had a marvellous impact on morale and the involvement of parents in the school?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend should extend to the parents of children at the school that he mentioned our thanks for being so forward looking and enterprising in what they have done. If the school cares to invite me to visit it, I shall have great pleasure in accepting such an invitation.

Mr. Flannery: Is the Minister implying that if we reorganised the schools and had the caretaker telling the man next door to do repairs, suddenly the crumbling buildings — the Minister's predecessor said that in Sheffield they were "crummy", for instance — would come to life and be done up properly? Is it not a fact that the Government do not provide enough money to make the schools habitable? If the money is not forthcoming, the half million unemployed building workers who are ready to do the work will not be able to do it? Are not the Government helping private education while the schools of 90 per cent. of our children are going to ruin?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman occupies his own special time warp and does not understand what is happening in the education service. All our policies are designed to make sure that we get value for money from our schools. I dare say that because of that he supports our policy on local financial management.

Mr. Hill: Does my hon. Friend agree that the difficulty about some of the priorities on repairs and maintenance can quite often mean that a school is overlooked? In my constituency the Millbrook comprehensive school has been overlooked for several years. The outbuildings are made of wood and are rotting. There are Acrows supporting the beams in the classrooms and children have to walk around them to be taught. Perhaps that is one case my hon. Friend will examine to see whether he can bring that school back into an active programme of repair and maintenance.

Mr. Dunn: I congratulate my hon. Friend on making such effective representations on behalf of his constituents. If he cares to write to me about the case I shall inquire into it.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can the Minister tell us of any local authority that he has visited that has not pressed him for more resources to repair existing schools? Can he tell us of any local authority that he has visited that is not desperate to replace old schools with new ones? Is it not obscene that when the Government get a little bit of extra money they spend it on city technology colleges rather than on desperately needed repairs to and replacement of schools? Surely the Government ought to be putting resources into state schools and not adopting this D-I-Y approach to school building.

Mr. Dunn: We spend over £500 million a year on capital projects and many millions more on repair and maintenance. I object to the hon. Member implying that all the faults in our school stock have arisen in recent months. They have not. I recently visited schools where problems have existed for more than two decades. Those problems did not arise recently.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

4. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with progress towards the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

19. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on progress in introducing the general certificate of secondary education.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the past few weeks some 600,000 pupils have started courses leading to the GCSE. The measures that my right hon. Friend anounced on 10 June have allowed all local authorities to increase expenditure on books and equipment for the GCSE. In addition, further training for the GCSE will be supported by a programme of £15 million in the financial year 1987-88 under the new in-service training arrangements from 1 April 1987.

Mr. Proctor: How much of the funding has gone to the county of Essex?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that this year the county of Essex has Government-supported expenditure of £620,000. For 1987 and 1988 it will receive Government support of £664,000.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware that some pupils are having to be sent home from classes because of the failure of local education authorities and examining boards to reach agreement about payments for cover for teachers who take time off for training? That includes training for examiners and moderators for the GCSE. Will my hon. Friend encourage local education authorities and boards to reach an agreement that will prevent this happening in future?

Mrs. Rumbold: As my hon. Friend may be aware, the recent Scott judgment in the courts made it clear that covering for absent colleagues is a professional obligation on teachers. For that reason, it is disheartening to know that teachers are refusing to fulfil that obligation. That is probably further proof that we need clearly defined and properly enforceable contracts for teachers.

Mr. Freud: What advice will the Minister give to an hon. Member who receives a letter from a schoolmaster saying that the examining board has not sent the syllabus and thus cannot teach pupils for the GCSE?

Mrs. Rumbold: If the hon. Gentleman will let me have details, I shall be happy to take the matter up.

Mr. Pawsey: I acknowledge that the GCSE is the best prepared examination ever and that some £80 million has been made available for its inception, but will my hon.

Friend none the less accept that concern is being expressed by teachers about the staffing implications of the new examination? Will she assure the House that she is keeping this aspect under review?

Mrs. Rumbold: We are of course monitoring the introduction of the GCSE examination very carefully, but I remind my hon. Friend that this new examination has been widely welcomed and that it was important that we should get it off to a good start. Most teachers have been extremely co-operative and very anxious to ensure that the examination becomes a success.

University Grants Committee

5. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers about the future funding of the University Grants Committee.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): My right hon. Friend and I met representatives of the AUT on 24 July, when we discussed various aspects of university funding and other matters.

Dr. Godman: Is the Minister aware of the very deep concern of members of the association in Scotland about the threatened closure of highly reputable university departments in Scotland? Is he also aware that this is particularly acute in Strathclyde university, where the very fine departments of mathematics and biochemistry are so threatened? Will the Minister assure the House that Scottish universities will not suffer such dismemberment of departments? Does he not agree that the time has surely arrived for the establishment of a Scottish UGC?

Mr. Walden: In the first place, I think that the hon. Gentleman is dramatising. Secondly, there has been no geographical discrimination against Scotland. Thirdly, if the hon. Gentleman is referring to the UGC's selectivity exercise, I can only commend the UGC for the boldness with which that exercise is being pursued.

Mr. Forth: Is my hon. Friend yet in a position to say anything to the House about the future of Ruskin college? Many people are most anxious to know what is to happen to this most valued institution.

Mr. Walden: I share the concern that has reached me about recent incidents at Ruskin college. For that reason I wrote to the principal of the college asking for his account of events there. I have now received that account. It has not reassured me. I have therefore asked the principal to call to see me next Monday. I am sure that no right hon. or hon. Member is against the education of trade unionists. If, on the other hand, that education is to be in the spirit of the intellectual equivalent of the closed shop—and that is what the accusations are about—the taxpayer, who, to a very large extent, funds this college, will expect clear answers to clear questions.

Mr. Dormand: When a person is deemed by a university to be capable of undertaking a first degree course, will he or she be assured of financial assistance either from the university or from the local education authority? If the answer to that question is no, what will be the effect, not only on that person, but on the wellbeing and economic state of the country?

Mr. Walden: I am not at all clear about the point of the hon. Gentleman's question. If he is asking his question on the basis of an individual case, I ask him to write to me about it. In general, more people are receiving maintenance grants than ever before.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that Ruskin college has striven very hard to protect two rights: the right of an individual to express his views, and the right of other people to disagree with those views? Does he also accept that the college should not be criticised for trying to maintain fairness between those two fundamental rights, and that no one has the right to object to other people being critical of his views?

Mr. Walden:

"Ruskin's members are not there as union members or socialists but as teachers and students. Ruskin is not a party school diffusing received opinion."

That comes from this week's *New Statesman*. I commend the article in question to the hon. Gentleman.

School Governors

6. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to seek to change the constitution of school governing bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Education Bill provides for school governing bodies to be freed from domination by local education authority representatives and, armed with effective powers, to be more broadly representative of parents and the wider community served by the school.

Mr. Howarth: Although the modest changes in the Education Bill are welcome, does my hon. Friend agree that real accountability will come only when parents are given a decisive say, when politicians are given virtually no say and when the boards of governors will be able to manage their entire budgets themselves?

Mr. Dunn: I congratulate my hon. Friend and some others of my hon. Friends on the recent publication of their document, "Save our Schools". I urge hon. Members not to underestimate the substantial powers that the Education Bill will put in the hands of reconstituted governing bodies and all governors and parents, who will serve on them in much larger numbers than hitherto.

Mrs. Dunwoody: May we therefore take it that the Minister will treat seriously the views of governors who do not want their village schools closed? When they are asking for continued education, will he ensure that he supports them in keeping village schools in being?

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made the position regarding village schools quite clear at our recent party conference. The hon. Lady will know that certain legal requirements have to be followed before a local education authority can close a school. I know that she has exercised part of her right in that respect quite recently.

Mr. Haslehurst: I agree with the extent of parental involvement that my hon. Friend has set, but does he agree that, if it is to be effective, parents who go on governing bodies should be adequately trained for the task? Does he agree that there may be a limitation in that some people, because of professional or other duties, will find it difficult to come forward to take up the role?

Mr. Dunn: The question of training school governors applies to all governors, irrespective of their source. We are committed to providing some money for training. Decisions about how training is provided may well rest with local education authorities or organisations such as the Open University. My hon. Friend's point is effective and good.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that, in Leeds, and, no doubt, in other Labour-controlled councils, school governing bodies are being packed wth Labour nominees way beyond the proportion of seats that that party occupies in the council? As the proportions of political groups or bodies are now enshrined in legislation, will the Minister introduce legislation to apply the same view to school governing bodies?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman knows that when the Bill receives Royal Assent local education authority domination will cease once and for all. I am fully aware of what is happening in Leeds, Brent, Haringey and elsewhere, where the councils are Labour-controlled. I condemn such domination and the elimination of interests other than those which appear to be solely in the interests of the Labour party.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: When my hon. Friend examines the governorships of city technology colleges, if he meets resistance in the city of Birmingham, would he care to locate one next door in the borough of Solihull?

Mr. Dunn: I welcome any proposal to set up CTCs. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that 20 would be the initial target. I hope that, in time, it will be 120, if not many more.

Teachers (Shortage)

7. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the shortage of teachers of mathematics, sciences and craft, design and technology in schools.

14. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the shortage of teachers of mathematics, sciences and craft, design and technology in schools.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In January 1986 local authorities in England reported 359 unfilled posts in mathematics, 407 in science and 201 in craft design technology. Although the vacancies amount to only just over 1 per cent. of posts in these subjects, I am nevertheless concerned about the supply. I have taken several measures, including the allocation of £16·5 million next year, in support of in-service training for teachers of these subjects.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Secretary of State agree that those figures are an indictment of seven years of a Tory Government who pledged themselves to improving the country's economic performance? If they do not provide sufficient science, mathematics and other technological subject teachers, they never can improve our economic performance. What plans does the right hon. Gentleman have to end the process of cuts in universities, polytechnics and teacher training institutes, which is at the root of the problem? Does he agree that in-service training cannot solve the shortage which has been caused by the lack of educational training places for universities and other institutions of higher education?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Member could not have been in the House earlier when I announced confirmation of the increase in polytechnic funding for next year. He should also be aware that I have increased the numbers for initial teacher training in primary and secondary schools by amounts as high as 20 per cent. for the next three years.

I completely reject the suggestion that the shortage of teachers in these subjects is a recent problem—it goes back to the 1940s and 1950s. For a time in the 1940s and 1950s, young boys who were intended for national service were relieved of that duty if they studied these subjects.

Mr. Corbett: Is the Minister aware that a survey of 97 secondary schools in the city of Birmingham showed that about one third of mathematics teaching is done by those who have either weak or no paper qualifications in that subject? Does he accept that this gross shortage denies proper opportunities to thousands of students to acquire vital skills in these subjects? The establishment of the city technology colleges will cream off the better qualified to what are likely to be better-equipped institutions and better-paid jobs. That will make the situation even worse.

Mr. Baker: In the first part of his supplementary the hon. Gentleman made a good point. I agree with him that, although the vacancy rate for such teachers is just under 1 per cent., it does mask the problem that many teachers are not qualified in and trained for teaching these subjects. This is not due to a lack of opportunities. The opportunities are there. This year we have introduced a £1,200 bursary for graduates who want to train in these subjects. I am glad to report that applications for initial teacher training in physics and technology have improved significantly since that announcement.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: How much?

Mr. Baker: Applications for teacher training in physics have increased by 9 per cent., and craft and technology applications by about 20 per cent. That is well above the rates we need.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: How many in numbers?

Mr. Baker: I will tell the hon. Gentleman the numbers if he wants to know. It is a real increase over last year.

Sir Dudley Smith: I echo a previous supplementary from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). Is my right hon. Friend aware that a number of village schools of excellence do not have any particular staffing problems and, in the circumstances, will he think twice before abolishing them?

Mr. Baker: In the last few months, I can assure my hon. Friend that I have visited many village schools with small numbers of children in them — 15, 20 or 30. They provide excellent education. I wish to make it absolutely clear that it is not the Government's intention to close such schools. In many cases they provide an essential ingredient to hold a community together.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one way to improve the critical situation regarding physics and mathematics teaching is to encourage better links, including financial, between industry and teaching? Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that in Norwich there is already evidence of industrial support for the new city technology colleges? That is good and it is the right way to proceed.

Mr. Baker: I welcome the support of my hon. Friend. Norwich was not on the initial list, but if people come forward in Norwich and want to establish a technology college, I should be happy to look at the application.

Industry links are very important with regard to the teaching of mathematics and physics. Many companies are already helping. Plessey, GEC and BP have given bursaries of one kind or another. Some authorities are approaching their local companies to see whether any executives wish to go back into teaching.

Mr. Radice: Does the Secretary of State not recognise that we will not begin to solve the teacher shortages until there is a long-term deal for the profession? Although I regret the decision of one teachers' union to restart industrial action, is it not the case that the Government's dithering, highlighted in today's press, is adding to the uncertainty? When is the Secretary of State going to come clean and tell the House how the teachers' dispute will be solved?

Mr. Baker: The current position is that the employers and unions are to meet under ACAS in Nottingham on the weekend after next in yet another attempt to resolve the two-year-old dispute. Since the Coventry meeting in July, the Main report for Scotland has been published and the Government are considering its implications, which are exceedingly complex. While all that is taking place, I utterly condemn the action of NAS/UWT in threatening further disruption next week. It is not the Government who will be blamed for the lack of agreement. The parties have not yet reached an agreement.

National Advisory Body (Planning Exercise)

8. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education on the National Advisory Body planning exercise 1987-88.

16. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education on the National Advisory Body planning exercise 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the association on 15 October. Among the matters discussed was the National Advisory Body's planning exercise for 1987-88.

Mr. Brown: Will the Minister give an assurance that what appears to be a Government climbdown will be permanent and that the polytechnics will not be put through the same hoops next year?

Mr. Walden: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman thinks we have climbed down from. When HMI last looked at this area, it formed the view that there was capacity for more students in the public sector of higher education. We have increased our contribution to the public sector by a factor of almost three times inflation, 8 per cent., and that is in recognition of the excellent performance of the polytechnics and colleges.

Mr. Key: Is it true that Birmingham city council has threatened to sack the director of Birmingham polytechnic if he allows *The Times* to be purchased for the institution? When will the Government bring forward proposals to give corporate status to our polytechnics to protect their freedom?

Mr. Walden: I note my hon. Friend's remarks about Birmingham polytechnic. In a speech in Birmingham yesterday I made the point that if there was any evidence of political pressure on polytechnics, the only honourable route for the principals would be robust resistance.

On my hon. Friend's second point, I assisted yesterday at a very interesting interchange between representatives of the labour movement on the question of corporate status for polytechnics, and I listened with great interest to the divergent points of view.

Mr. Sheerman: Does not recent experience show that there must be a better way of planning the development of our polytechnic system? Is the Minister not aware that on 14 October, only a few days ago, the bids put in for capital development for research in technology and science totalled £50 million, yet the Government have indicated that they will give only a measly £5 million? Is that the way to develop research in the polytechnics?

Mr. Walden: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not welcome the extra funding that we have provided for that area. I assure him that many a polytechnic director has welcomed it in conversation with me.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about building and equipment funding, will he please bear in mind that the actual outturn of expenditure was 50 per cent. more, and double what the Government provide, because local authorities supplement it. All that is public money.

Mr. Marlow: As Northamptonshire is an area of high technology, as the population of Northamptonshire are the most intelligent in the country, and as we are underprovided in higher education, will my hon. Friend wave his magic wand and transform our beautiful college into a polytechnic?

Mr. Walden: I rather thought that my hon. Friend would ask that question. The possibility of upgrading colleges and polytechnics is being considered by the National Advisory Body at board level. The matter will then come to committee level, and a recommendation will be made to the Government. No doubt my hon. Friend will energetically promote the interests of his college.

Universities (Funds)

9. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer of 8 July, *Official Report*, column 161, what information he has about the effects on each university of the means used to determine the resources allocated to teaching and research purposes, respectively.

Mr. Walden: The universities most affected by the introduction of the UGC's new resource allocation arrangements were notified by the committee of the main factors leading to an increase or a reduction in their grant relative to the average. Copies of these letters are in the Library.

Mr. Dalyell: What prompted Sir David Hancock and Mr. F. E. R. Butler, the second secretary to the Treasury, to ask their own accounting advisers to make a report on the future of the universities? Why was that necessary?

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman must realise that the position of universities is constantly kept under review.

Mr. Forsyth: I welcome my hon. Friend's recent statement about the future of Stirling university being secure. Nevertheless, will he accept that the formula method of funding used by the UGC is prejudicial to small universities such as Stirling and St. Andrew's, which have always had high standards of quality and excellence?

Mr. Walden: I would not question for a moment the standards of excellence of Scottish universities, and I naturally regret the perturbations through which the universities are going but it must be remembered that a number of small universities are perhaps trying to do rather too much in too many departments, and so difficult changes have to be made.

Dr. Bray: Is it not pathetic for the Government to have reduced the Royal Society and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils to painstakingly tracing the decline in British basic research? Are the Government aware that by their intransigent attitude to the claims made for science in the universities and research councils they are destroying the industrial future of the country?

Mr. Walden: The Government place enormous importance on basic research. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would remember that in the longer term the ability of this country to carry out the fundamental research to which both he and I attach importance will be conditioned largely by its prosperity as a nation.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Maxton: Does the Prime Minister agree with the Secretary of State for Scotland that it is essential that the teachers in Scotland know the Government's view of the Main committee, and whether they will give the money to finance those proposals before they take a decision on whether they will accept those proposals? Will she make a statement today, making it clear that the Government intend to finance in full the Main proposals in Scotland and the proposals for teachers' pay in England and Wales?

The Prime Minister: The Government are giving the careful consideration to the Main report to which it is entitled. We are also taking a close interest in the talks taking place in England and Wales, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science said. We want an outcome that is good for the children and gives them uninterrupted education, and that means a clearly defined contract and a pay structure that attracts and retains teachers of the right quality.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to a report in *The Sun* last week showing that a family of 13 was receiving something approaching £2,000 a week in benefits at the expense of the ratepayers and taxpayers. Is this not an appalling misappropriation of public funds? Will she give urgent consideration to putting a top limit of, say, £150 a week on what any family can receive in any circumstances from public funds? Will she further make changes in the system so that nobody, whether British citizens or foreign nationals, can receive benefit until they have paid national insurance contributions for at least a year?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's concern about that case, and many people were concerned about the vast sums that were being paid out. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is considering the matter, and I shall pass my hon. Friend's comments on to him.

Mr. Hattersley: Why has manufacturing industry, which in the last full year of the Labour Government contributed a £4 billion surplus to the balance of trade, now slumped to a deficit of £4 billion?

The Prime Minister: It has done so because it is not sufficiently competitive overseas.

Mr. Hattersley: Why does the Prime Minister not admit the truth? Is it not a fact that investment in manufacturing is now lower than it was on the day she was elected? Is that not the direct result of her policies, which have produced in Britain the highest real interest rates in any developed industrialised country?

The Prime Minister: No. The test of an economy is not the rate of investment in one particular aspect of its wealth but the rate of investment and the success of the economy as a whole. The right hon. Gentleman always gets up and offers selective figures. The volume of total fixed investment is at a record level. One million new jobs have been created since 1983. The profitability of industrial and commercial companies is at the highest level since 1964.

Mr. Hattersley: As the Prime Minister reminds us that the real criterion is the performance of the economy as a whole, will she tell us about the performance of the economy as a whole on the balance of trade over the past two months?

The Prime Minister: Again, the right hon. Gentleman has taken two particular months. Exports are running at a record level, including over the past two months.

Mr. Key: On Sunday week my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and other party leaders will represent us at the annual Cenotaph service. Does my right hon. Friend share my deep distaste at the proposals of the so-called peace movement to substitute white poppies for red poppies? This causes deep offence to the vast majority of people and, incidentally, reduces the income of the Royal British Legion.

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's deep distaste. The Cenotaph service is a national occasion. It brings help and comfort to all our citizens and, I am sure, will continue to do just that.

Mr. Steel: In view of the Prime Minister's personal commitment to the Channel tunnel project, what will be her attitude to the project if British investors fail to come up with the British half of the cash necessary?

The Prime Minister: The decision whether to make the necessary investment is entirely one for British institutions. I have made it perfectly clear that no Government money

will be involved in this project. Nevertheless, France and Britain continue to find it an exciting and challenging project and hope that it will go ahead, but it is for the institutions themselves to make the decision.

Mr. Michael Morris: Does my right hon. Friend recall the time she opened Nene teacher training college—now the Nene college of advanced education—which has the fourth largest number of full-time equivalent higher degree courses? Will she therefore make representations to the National Advisory Body at least to accept a presentation from Nene concerning its future status as a polytechnic?

The Prime Minister: I know my hon. Friend's concern. I am sure that that institution's application will be carefully considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Q2. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ashton: With respect to interest rates going up, is the Prime Minister aware that the Library today released figures showing that the mortgage repayments on an average three-bedroomed London semi are £450 a month? When the Conservative party came to office, they were £120 a month. That is nearly 350 per cent. inflation. Why does the right hon. Lady not include house prices in the Government's inflation figures? Why does she fiddle the figures and create a situation in London whereby Camden is allowed to build only nine houses this year instead of the 1,000 it was building before, with the result that young couples cannot get on the housing list?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman refrains from saying that the standard of living is at its highest level ever, and so, too, is the standard of housing, with an extra 1 million houses more than during the lifetime of the last Labour Government. Much more money is being spent on renovation. Whatever the hon. Gentleman says, he cannot escape the fact that our housing record is far better than Labour's.

Mr. Maclean: Is my right hon. Friend aware that East Cumbria health authority will have an additional £300,000 to spend this year on direct patient care, money which has become available because of cost-improvement schemes, the success of the excellent new management system, and, of course, a remarkably low level of inflation?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate the health authority, as my hon. Friend has congratulated the Government, on keeping a lower level of inflation. The Health Service is in excellent shape and I wish that more people would recognise that fact. As it is, Labour Members never hesitate to criticise a service which employs 1 million people. It would be as well if we congratulated them on, and thanked them for, their services.

Q4. **Mr. Michie** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Michie: In view of the dramatic increase in violent crime over the past decade, does the Prime Minister accept that reducing the number of weapons rather than arming the police could avoid and reduce crimes such as the tragic shooting at Ughill near Sheffield? Will the Prime Minister immediately recommend that we have a permanent review committee of the Home Office to recommend on the availability of weapons and arms in Britain?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his question. The Home Office and, in particular, the chief inspector of police, will keep that matter under permanent review and if there are any changes they will involve that part of the Home Office.

Q5. **Mr. Adley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: Reverting to the Channel tunnel, is my right hon. Friend aware that the Advertising Standards Authority requires that advertisements should be "legal, decent, honest and truthful" and that the ASA has now required Flexilink, the opponents of the Channel tunnel, to withdraw its current advertising campaign? Will she deplore with me the disreputable, disgraceful and, indeed, dishonest campaign that has been waged by professional opponents, led by the rather flabby Mr. Sherwood, against the project? Having already confirmed her Government's commitment to it today, does she agree that the City of London has an opportunity to refute the allegation that it is only interested in short-term profits rather than in long-term investments by backing the project?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that the Flexilink advertisements have been withdrawn. I repeat that the French and British Governments hope that the Channel tunnel project will go ahead. It is very challenging, but the decision on who invests what is entirely a matter for the institutions. There will be no Government money. It is a challenging project and the French and British Governments continue to support it.

Q6. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clelland: Has the Prime Minister yet had time to read the article in *The Observer* on Sunday, which contains accusations that she and others lied over the Westland affair? Does she agree——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may have arrived here fairly recently, but "lie" is not a parliamentary word.

Mr. Clelland: Has the Prime Minister yet had time to read the article in *The Observer* on Sunday? Are the accusations made in it true, and, if so, is that one reason why some civil servants are so reluctant to appear before the Select Committee on Defence?

The Prime Minister: I have not read the article. I do not intend to read it. The facts were set out in statements and debates and in the Government's reply to Select Committees. Those are the true facts.

Mr. Sumberg: Is it not ironic that when there were terrorist bombs in Paris last month the French Government looked to us for support, and yet, with

evidence that Syria is behind the Hindawi affair, European Governments are conspicuous by their silence? When will our European partners realise that in relation to terrorism we either stand together or we hang together?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's disappointment that the European statement on Syria was not stronger. I hope that our European colleagues will consider the matter further, especially in view of the bold statements previously made. For example, in September 1984 the Foreign Affairs Council said:

"If one partner suffers a serious terrorist attack involving abuse of diplomatic immunity partners will be ready to consider common action in response."

I hope that our colleagues will ensure that at the next meeting they put what they said then into practice.

Q7. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Litherland: Is the Prime Minister aware that last winter many old-age pensioners died from hypothermia? Does she agree that pensioners on supplementary benefit should automatically receive the £5 heating allowance so that so many people do not die from hypothermia this year?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. The cost of fuel and light has remained stable, so there will be no change in the heating additions — *[Interruption.]* However, it ill becomes any Labour Member to criticise this Government, given that expenditure on heating additions has risen to more than £400 million, compared with £90 million in 1978-79. Moreover, accusations of not caring come ill from a party which supported a coal strike designed to deprive pensioners of heat and light.

Mr. Hume: Is the Prime Minister aware that there is serious public concern over the Stalker affair? As there is also concern, which is felt by hon. Members on both sides of the House, about a serious miscarriage of justice in the Guildford and Birmingham bombing cases, will that not tend to undermine confidence in the administration of justice, particularly as it applies to Irish people, unless it is allayed? Will the right hon. Lady take a personal interest in those issues and ensure that steps are taken to see that justice is done in those cases?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that questions about a particular case should be directed to the Lord Chancellor or to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The hon. Gentleman will also know that anything that one might say about the Stalker affair could impinge on one of the inquiries into the RUC, and so I can say nothing further.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Will not the problem of hypothermia among the old become much worse in the decades ahead if we fail to press ahead with a civil nuclear power programme?

The Prime Minister: I take my hon. Friend's point. It is necessary for this country to go ahead with a nuclear power programme. It will be impossible to obtain all the energy that the Western world, and the developed world, need unless nuclear power programmes go ahead.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which arises directly from your earlier ruling. My hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) referred to an article in *The Observer* concerning

"What Blunt Bernard said to Reluctant Colette."

Anyone reading that article will see that it makes serious allegations against——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not raising a legitimate point of order. My ruling was that in this Chamber hon. Members should not accuse each other of lying. That would be unparliamentary. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman knows that, and would not do it himself.

Mr. Dalyell: No one is accused of lying. It is a question of information in a paper. Surely the advice that you receive from the learned Clerk must be that a statement should be forthcoming. Is the Prime Minister going to take legal action——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The unparliamentary expression "the Prime Minister lied" cannot be allowed in the Chamber. That ruling is in the interest of good order, and the whole House will agree with that.

Mr. Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The article says that Bernard Ingham told Colette Bow that

"You will . . . do what you are . . . well told"

Either there is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is reprehensible that a Front Bench spokesman should try to continue Question Time through me. I stopped the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) and asked him to rephrase his question, which he correctly did. That is the end of the matter. I do not know what Mr. Bernard Ingham said, and it is nothing to do with me.

Mr. Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter of the utmost seriousness. Either there has been a gross contempt of the House in the information that we have been given, or there has been a gross libel of a senior member of the Prime Minister's staff. For the Prime Minister to pretend that she is unaware of those allegations and for her to be unwilling to make a statement at the Dispatch Box is an abuse in itself.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the Front Bench believe that, they can raise the matter at Prime Minister's Question Time on Thursday.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of Question Time?

Mr. Skinner: Yes. Would you agree, Mr. Speaker— *[Interruption.]* She is scuttling away. Would you agree, Mr. Speaker, on the question of getting parliamentary language correct, that my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) could have used the phrase which I used some time ago and which you accepted— that the Prime Minister would not recognise the truth if it were sprayed on her eyeballs?

Mr. Clelland: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman did the right thing in rephrasing his question. I do not think that I can help him any more. I do not think that we want to pursue this matter.

Mr. Clelland: I assumed that I had chosen my words very carefully. I said that the article contained accusations that the Prime Minister had lied. I was not accusing the Prime Minister of lying, but merely quoting the article.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman looks in "Erskine May" he will see that words used by attribution are equally unparliamentary.

Foreign Affairs Council

3.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffery Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council which I chaired in Luxembourg on 27 October. The Minister for Trade represented the United Kingdom.

The Council approved the Commission's intention to launch immediate action in the GATT with a view to securing rapid removal of Japanese discriminatory barriers to imports of alcoholic drinks. The Council also decided to keep under close review the conditions under which Japanese products are exported to the European Community.

The Council welcomed the agreement with the United States settling the outstanding trade dispute over citrus fruit and pasta.

The Council also discussed briefly the negotiations with the United States about the trade effects of enlargement, the proposals for the 1987 generalised scheme of preferences and recent Canadian trade measures.

Agreement was also reached on new Community programmes in energy and telecommunications. These include allocations of £29 million to Northern Ireland.

The Council welcomed the recent agreement on a revised Community mandate for the negotiations with Mediterranean countries on the maintenance of their trade access to the Community following the accession of Spain and Portugal.

The Council considered its reaction to the expressed wish of COMECON to enter into official relations with the Community as well as possible bilateral agreements with Romania, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. It confirmed the importance of mutually beneficial commercial and economic links with eastern European countries.

The Council reached agreement on the implementation of a Community-wide ban on imports of gold coins from South Africa. The member states also adopted a decision suspending new investment in South Africa by firms and individuals in the Community. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be announcing shortly details of how this measure will be implemented.

The Council approved proposals to grant the Palestinian populations of the west bank and Gaza preferential access to the Community market, and agreed to establish a fresh aid programme for those territories. These proposals will bring practical help to those living in the occupied territories. They were the result of a British initiative. They underline our continuing commitment to the search for peace in the region.

I gave my Community colleagues a full briefing on the Hindawi case and presented them with the conclusive evidence of Syrian official involvement. They were both impressed and disturbed. The Greek representative could not associate himself with any measures or statement against Syria or the Syrian Government. With that sole exception, all Ministers expressed their collective sense of outrage that the agencies of a state had been involved in such an incident. And they expressed full understanding and support for the action which we had taken. They undertook that no partner would accept as a diplomat any of the Syrians who had been expelled from London in connection with this case.

We instructed the Political Committee to meet on 6 November to continue this discussion. By that date ambassadors in Damascus will have presented the Syrian Government with the evidence of what has taken place, and will have reported back. We have agreed to consider at the next ministerial meeting in London, on 10 November, the possibility of action in relation to arms sales to Syria; high-level visits to and from Syria; the activities of Syrian embassies in the member states; security arrangements affecting the operations of Syrian Arab airlines. Yesterday's proceedings went some way—but by no means as far as the House would have wished—to send the Syrian Government a clear message that their behaviour has been intolerable.

Finally, Syria is one of the countries for which the Community's Mediterranean financial protocols expire next Saturday. Renewal requires unanimity. There can be no question of the United Kingdom agreeing to further financial assistance for Syria in present circumstances.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): First, I thank the Foreign Secretary for his statement. I welcome the agreement which was reached yesterday that the Palestinian inhabitants of the west bank and Gaza should now have preferential access to the Community markets and should enjoy a new aid programme. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us what other initiatives were suggested yesterday to promote peace between Israel and the Arabs? He rightly reminded the House on Friday that the absence of that is the fundamental cause of many of the terrorist acts which we have tragically witnessed in recent months.

Beyond that, we must accept that the outcome of yesterday's meeting was deplorable. Although Community Ministers had all agreed at earlier meetings under the Home Secretary, for example, that they would adopt concerted action against terrorism, half the Foreign Ministers concerned did not bother to turn up yesterday, and none of the other Foreign Ministers supported the right hon. and learned Gentleman's proposals.

Have any of the Community Governments now accepted the responsibility of protecting British interests in Syria? He was not able to tell us on Friday whether any other Government had accepted this responsibility and I hope that he will be able to do so this afternoon. The Opposition hope very much that the meeting on 10 November will be more successful in achieving common action in the areas which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has listed.

The House will be aware that the Opposition fully supported the Foreign Secretary's statement on Friday, and we support today his decision to impose financial and economic sanctions on Syria by vetoing any proposals for financial aid that may come before the Community. This is a precedent which I hope the right hon. and learned Gentleman will be prepared to follow in respect of other countries. Financial sanctions will undoubtedly cause unemployment and economic difficulty to the people of Syria—and in the circumstances, in my view, rightly so.

I pass to what the Foreign Secretary had to tell us about the discussions on South Africa. He must have found himself in some difficulty yesterday in arguing with his colleagues that they should not allow commercial or

[Mr. Denis Healey]

political national interests to impede concerted action against terrorism when Her Majesty's Government have done precisely that when the Community has considered concerted action against the South African Government, who have been guilty of terrorism on a large scale, especially in Namibia, and of armed attack on friendly states.

I should like to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman some questions about the discussions on South Africa yesterday. First, why has the Community agreed to exclude Namibia from the scope of its sanctions, thereby opening a gaping hole in the ring fence which it is supposed to erect around South Africa? The American Congress, now overriding the President's veto, has included Namibia in the American sanctions. Why has the Community excluded iron ore and ferrous metals from the scope of sanctions? Has the Community now accepted responsibility for ensuring that its members carry out the decisions that have already been taken in the last few months on sanctions against South Africa?

The Foreign Secretary must recognise that action against terrorism must be indivisible if we take it seriously, and his case against the pusillanimous behaviour of some of our Community partners over Syria will be enormously strengthened if he does not show the same pusillanimity in dealing with sanctions against South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman has, characteristically, spoilt his presentation of quite a reasonable set of points. The discussion on South Africa that took place yesterday was concerned simply with the enforcement of the measures agreed at the meeting on 16 September. We were able to reach agreement on the method of doing that by adopting definitions common to the Community and generally used within comparable provisions of the European Coal and Steel Community. The House will have a further opportunity of asking a large number of questions about South Africa during ordinary Foreign Office questions tomorrow.

Mr. Healey: I will.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman will, and I hope that he makes a better shot of it than he has today.

As to the substance of the matter, there is no question of a whole range of commercial and economic sanctions against Syria in the decision announced yesterday. What I announced, which was plainly accepted by the House, is that we will not assent to the granting of further financial aid to Syria. That seems to be entirely right and is supported on all sides of the House.

As for British interests, no decisions have yet been arrived at about whether, and if so in what fashion, interest sections will be established either in Damascus or in London.

With regard to the support of other Foreign Ministers, it should be recognised that all of them, with the exception of Greece, are prepared to take further action. Some of that further action will be for consideration at the meeting to be held on 10 November. One of the central problems yesterday was to secure unanimity from all the 11 on the same action being taken. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman, as does the entire House, that we want to see a more concerted and effective set of decisions coming from the Community at the next meeting.

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his welcome of the provisions made in relation to the Palestinians on the west bank and Gaza. That in itself is a useful initiative. We shall be returning to the subject of wider middle eastern questions when we next meet in political co-operation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am bound to take into account the fact that another statement is to follow that is of considerable importance, followed by a ten-minute Bill and an important Church Measure on which there is a great deal of interest. I shall allow questions on this matter to continue until four o'clock, but I bear in mind that there will be foreign affairs questions tomorrow.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many in this country believe that our so-called partners in the Community yesterday behaved in a tardy, timid and, above all, fatuous manner? Does he also agree that the behaviour of the French is particularly craven? If they cannot rally round in the cause of the fight against terrorism, what hope is there for any coherent Community policy on anything?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I share absolutely my hon. Friend's sense of disappointment at the failure to reach unanimous agreement yesterday, but it should be recognised that on very many of the measures before my colleagues the majority of them were prepared to take action of the kind we advocated. The problem was to secure unanimity from all of them in relation to all the measures we were seeking. It is for that reason that we shall be coming back to the matter on 10 November. It was regrettable that the French were unable to agree to a majority of the measures that we wanted, but I noted with interest that the President of France, in a television interview today, has said that, if proof of conduct of a terrorist kind was there,

"Europe's response ought to be total firmness."

He continued:

"there should be no compromise with terrorism and, above all, no compromise with states involved with terrorism."

I look forward to the fulfilment of that statement at our next meeting.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): How can it be thought appropriate, however outrageous Syrian behaviour may have been, to suspend EEC aid to Damascus when no such action has been taken to abrogate the EEC agreements with Israel, which has been guilty of much grosser offences of state terrorism against Lebanon against Syria against Iraq against Tunisia, and, for many years, against the Palestinian people both in Palestine and in the Palestinian diaspora?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has presented his characteristically specific view on the matter with characteristic vigour. The question of renewing any financial protocol in favour of Syria will not be supported by the United Kingdom. I am sure that that is right.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Did my right hon. and learned Friend discuss with his colleagues the abuse by some embassies of diplomatic baggage, whereby weapons and instruments of death can be spread about? If so, what progress did he make in reaching some

agreement that all embassy baggage should be scrutinised in the same way as any other baggage coming to this country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises a matter that has been discussed in the House many times. It was not discussed by European Community Ministers yesterday. The matter was fully considered by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of this House, which recognised the difficulty of attempting to impose a universal ban of the kind that my hon. Friend describes. We have made plain our willingness, in the event of manifest danger to human life, to provide for screening of diplomatic baggage. To go beyond that would involve real and substantial difficulties for the handling of ordinary diplomatic baggage for embassies, including our own.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Did the Foreign Secretary fail to persuade some European Governments of the facts of Syrian officials' complicity in terrorism, or does he believe that they continue in a long pattern of turning a blind eye to Syrian activities in this field while choosing softer options, such as Libya, to be the target of their attack? Does the Foreign Secretary believe that he has now persuaded the Prime Minister that sanctions are not immoral and were appropriate in this case? Does he believe that better preparation could have led to a clearer signal?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I persist in repudiating the parallel that the hon. Gentleman tries to make, along with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), between the way to treat state-directed terrorism and wider arguments about sanctions. Regarding the conviction of European countries, they were impressed by the quality and weight of the evidence advanced about Syrian involvement in the matter. There was no doubt about that. The difficulties arose about their willingness to agree—all 11 of them—on the same set of additional measures. In those circumstances, we are conducting the discussion further on 10 November.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that while the reaction of the French Government is disappointing, they nevertheless have hostages at risk, and that must colour their attitude? Will he assure the House that everything possible is being done so that we do not have hostages at risk? If they are unfortunately taken, what retaliatory action do we plan?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the difficulties created for everyone in such circumstances by the existence of hostages. Some hostages of our nationality are detained in the region. There is no way in which a state can guarantee the safety of its citizens from the risk of being taken in that way. I am sure that the firmest foundation of our policy on hostages remains our clear commitment to the view that we make no deals in respect of such matters.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman mean that he did not tell his colleagues of the disgraceful misuse of a diplomatic bag by the Syrians for the importation of terrorist weapons? Did he not discuss with the Italians their proposals for electronic surveillance of the bag? What does he intend to do about the arsenal of terrorist weaponry which is in the Syrian embassy here? Will he simply let it go either abroad or to other terrorist bodies in this country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that those matters are the subject of current consideration not only by our Government but also by the Italian Government. As far as I know, the Italian Government have not said in what way they intend precisely to put into effect their recent statement on the matter. There are real difficulties, studied and accepted by the Foreign Affairs Committee, about imposing a general ban or a general requirement for surveillance on bags of that kind.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is not the sickeningly inadequate response by our EEC allies to the Syrian terror not only a betrayal of our commitment but an incentive to further terrorism? Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House whether the French are continuing to sell arms to the Syrians?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. and learned Friend must understand—I say this with the greatest respect to him—that it will not be helpful to promote the collective response that is necessary in such circumstances if one commences by making a judgment about betrayal and sickeningly inadequate responses.

Mr. Lawrence: But that is what it is.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. Let me amplify that further. For example, in relation to my hon. and learned Friend's specific question about arms sales, one of the matters under discussion yesterday, on which, already yesterday, the majority of the Foreign Ministers present were prepared to agree, was a ban on further arms sales. One Government representative who specifically endorsed that was France's representative, so it is wrong for my hon. and learned Friend to take that particular case as an example. I repeat: the French Government's representative was willing to join the majority in endorsing a ban on future arms sales to Syria.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Did the Foreign Secretary discuss with his EEC colleagues the disclosure by Bernard Kalb of the fact that the American Administration had been deliberately lying about Libya, and had been involved in all sorts of dirty tricks to try to destabilise Gaddafi's regime? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now make a statement admitting that the reasons for bombing Libya were wrong, and that the Government have been misled by President Reagan, therefore? Will he give an explanation and, more importantly, make reparations to the Libyan people for that mistake?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The case on which the House reacted on Friday about Syrian Government involvement was a comprehensive and convincing case, which convinced my colleagues yesterday, with the exception of the Greek representative, as it convinced the House on Friday. There was no question of it being founded on evidence from the United States or anywhere else. The hon. Gentleman's questions about the bombing of Libya should compel him to consider the legitimacy of the bombing in Afghanistan.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Although I accept what my right hon. and learned Friend says about future arms contracts, will he give a categoric assurance that the present contract that the French apparently have with the Syrians will be cancelled?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot answer questions in detail about existing arms contracts with the French Government or any other Government. I am making it clear to the House that the French representative made it clear yesterday that France was ready to agree on the spot to the suspension of all arms sales to Syria — [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] — from member states in present circumstances.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): When the French President said on television,

"If the evidence against Syria is fair,"

was he not saying that many of the Ministers hoped that the evidence against Syria would be a little more reliable that the unequivocal evidence against Libya that was brought forward in the House and paraded before Privy Councillors only, which enabled the Prime Minister to carry out her policies, and which has now been revealed to have been fabricated entirely in the White House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is straying far from the statement and questions on it. There is no foundation whatsoever for the implications of what he is saying.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Although many of us may not have expected much more support from our so-called European allies, my right hon. and learned friend will no doubt be encouraged by what has been said on both sides of the House about the extra citrus trade privileges for the west bank, but is he aware that the present quota is kept exclusively for Israeli goods and is not spread to the occupied territories? Therefore, will he assure the House that that will be the case with the new allocation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The point raised by my hon. Friend is precisely the point that led us to propose new arrangements, which will involve an extension of existing arrangements for access to the Community market for producers on the west bank and the Gaza strip.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Foreign Secretary has led the House to believe that he has irrefutable evidence linking the Syrian Government with acts of terrorism. Was he able to place that evidence before his EEC ministerial colleagues? If he did, why were they not convinced, or has he more evidence that he will produce at the meeting in November?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has missed the point of my answers to earlier questions. I have already said twice that, with the exception of the Greek representative, all my European colleagues were impressed and convinced by the evidence that I laid before them, just as this House was convinced on Friday. There is no question of their not being convinced.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that the talks between COMECON and the Community were broken off in 1980 because of the invasion of Afghanistan? Can he tell the House what has changed in Afghanistan to enable those talks to be resumed?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Matters have changed since then in a number of respects, although not, unfortunately, in Afghanistan. It seems to us to be sensible to clear the way for bilateral trade agreements between the Community and the member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and in that context to look at the proposals for a relationship with the CMEA.

Mr. Healey: The Foreign Secretary made one statement that must have disturbed every hon. Member. Does he really mean that the Government do not know whether any other Government will represent Britain's interests in Damascus after the rupture of diplomatic relations? That would be a uniquely dangerous situation in which to leave 250 British citizens. In Libya, our interests are represented by Italy and our interests in the Argentine are also represented. Is the Foreign Secretary saying that he does not know whether any other Government will represent our interests in Syria?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman has made a good point, although not in the way he put it. He must listen to me with care. There is no problem about getting another Government to represent British interests in Syria, but the necessary consent from Syria is not yet forthcoming. The right hon. Gentleman is right to be anxious about that.

Availability for Work (Test)

4.1 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the test of availability for work.

This summer we have been testing a new procedure following criticisms by the Public Accounts Committee about the effectiveness of the current arrangements for testing the availability for work of claimants for unemployment benefit. The new procedure consists of an expanded questionnaire which is issued to all new claimants and seeks information about the work they are looking for and what steps they are taking to make themselves available for work. Claimants have also been interviewed where appropriate to assist in determining their eligibility for benefit and to help them towards suitable labour market opportunities.

Perhaps I could remind the House that it is a long-standing condition for the receipt of unemployment benefit that persons have to be available for work on every day for which they make a claim. The test of availability is normally satisfied by persons showing that they are actively seeking work on those days for which benefit is paid. The final decision about entitlement rests with the independent statutory authorities — an adjudication officer in the first instance — and there are statutory rights of appeal against decisions made.

The new procedure that we have tested in the pilot areas has shown that the better evidence provided by the new form enables a proper assessment to be made of a person's entitlement to benefit. Therefore, we will introduce it progressively in all unemployment benefit offices from the end of October. The rules that make benefit payable only to those people who are available for work are long standing and the Government have no present intention to change them. The new arrangements are simply changes in the procedure in applying the existing rules.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I cannot offer thanks to the Government for a shabby statement that involves millions of our people, which is clearly hiding its true purpose and which has clearly been dragged out of the Government by the exposure and campaign led by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), for which the House is most grateful. I protest that the statement has been made one hour after it was made in another place. That shows, yet again, the Government's contempt for elected representatives.

Is the Paymaster General aware that his justification for this 18th fiddle of the unemployment figures — that he has the support of the Public Accounts Committee — is fraudulent? Is he not aware that the Public Accounts Committee made it clear that it welcomed any effective changes in the work test rules, provided they were not oppressive? Even the Treasury reply to the Public Accounts Committee recommended that the series of questions now to be put to everyone claiming unemployment benefit should be put only to new claimants suspected to be in doubt about their benefit.

If the Paymaster General is anxious to save public money by denying benefits to those people making illegal claims, perhaps he will tell the House what surveys or estimates of fraudulent payments have been made, because it is costing him twice as much to hire 1,500 new benefit officers as the pilot survey estimated he would save through the shake-out of the unemployed. Does he not accept that the real purpose of this exercise is not to save public money but to reduce by a process of intimidation and trick questions a quarter of the people included in the unemployment figures, thus reducing the number of unemployed to 3 million in time for the general election?

Can the Paymaster General assure the House that answering questions such as whether claimants will work away from home, whether they will work for a minimum wage, whatever that level is, and whether they are able immediately to be free from their dependants, especially where the mother or wife is in a part-time job or disabled, will not penalise them in terms of benefit? Will he make available to the House the guidance notes given to the benefit officers who will be judging the replies, and will he make it clear that answers will not be used oppressively to deny people benefit? That was requested by the PAC. The statement is a further example of the Government's vindictive nature. They are more anxious to fiddle unemployment figures and to blame and harass the unemployed than to provide jobs for them.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was followed by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and they both made a great deal out of a survey and an administrative change first announced to the House in reply to a parliamentary question in March. Yesterday, both hon. Members made use of documents that are freely available to the staff side in the Department of Employment and which were part of preparations that we have been carrying out for some time. As usual, they latched on to this administrative change, which tightens up our procedures in response to a request from an all-party Committee of the House, and tried to turn it into a basis for wild political allegations.

The law that requires a claimant for unemployment benefit to be available for work was last restated in 1975 in an Act passed by the previous Labour Government. It has been the law ever since the introduction of the new Beveridge social security system. The vast majority of people of all political persuasions think that it is a sensible law.

Mr. Prescott: Just ask them now.

Mr. Clarke: I challenge the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East to say whether the Labour party, if it were ever returned to office, would start paying unemployment benefit to people who told our officers that they did not want work and were not available for work. Obviously, it would not. The questions that we have tried out and are now introducing are in no way onerous. The form is clear and asks perfectly reasonable questions. It has been drawn up carefully in the light of the law established in the judgment of the commissioners as well as that established by long-standing practice. It gives a basis upon which we can judge eligibility for benefit. That is what the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee clearly said we were not doing.

The hon. Gentleman talked about cost. We are taking on 1,400 staff and the cost to the Government will be £14 million, but if that reduces the number of claims allowed by less than 2 per cent. it will pay for itself. The rest is

[Mr. Clarke]

public money saved, not by behaving in an onerous fashion but simply by not paying benefit to people whom this House has always said are not really entitled to it.

The hon. Gentleman asked about surveys. He follows these matters as closely as I do and studies the annual labour force surveys that we produce. He knows that those surveys show that, of the over 3 million unemployed claimants, over 800,000 appear to be economically inactive according to their replies to the surveys. In the privacy of their homes, over 300,000 of those receiving benefit tell our surveyors that they would not like work. That is the figure we arrive at as a result of our surveys. Everybody knows that the Public Accounts Committee was basically right when it said that a more accurate test is needed so that benefit is paid only to those who are genuinely entitled to it.

The hon. Gentleman asked what will happen if people are not available for work because they are disabled, pregnant, or have other extremely good reasons. The answer is that we have told our officers that these people are to be referred to the Department of Health and Social Security and given leaflets, because they are almost certainly entitled to other benefits. But they are not unemployed by any definition, either legally or in common sense, and they are not entitled to unemployment benefit as a result of Acts of Parliament passed by this House, including the Acts of Parliament of former Governments.

Of course the guidance notes will be made available. Like the other changes that we make from time to time to our arrangements, these changes are not designed to secure any unworthy purpose. They are designed merely to ensure that we discharge our duty, as the all-party Committees of this House require, to account properly for public money and pay benefit to those who are entitled to it—which we do—but not to those who do not qualify for it. That is what we intend to achieve. The unemployment figures will continue to reflect, as they do now, the best monthly estimate that we can make of the unemployed. It is quite absurd for the hon. Gentleman to resist every change that we make and to want to add to the unemployment figures those who are not unemployed.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, particularly in those parts of the country that resemble mine, one of the great tragedies is that a number of young people claim unemployment benefit because they have been persuaded that it is better for them to do so rather than to seek work? Will he assure the House that the new procedures will encourage them to take work, because their opportunities for being promoted at work are real?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. None of our officers will be instructed to deter people from seeking work by offering them benefit instead. One of the advantages of the procedure that we are introducing—schemes like Restart and the availability test—is that it will enable our officials to find out more about the unemployed. The system has lapsed into one in which people merely came in, made rather short applications and then were paid benefit. There was no further contact with them. Those who are not entitled to benefit will be refused benefit, and so they should be. Those who are entitled to benefit will be steered to the Jobcentres and to the record number of vacancies that they now have on their books.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): Many of the new questions that are to be asked of those who are suffering the early shock of losing their jobs are hypothetical. Since Ministers refuse to answer hypothetical questions, why should newly unemployed people be required to do so? On the same point, the briefing that the Paymaster General has just circulated refers to the unemployed claimants "offering" additional information. Will he tell the House quite clearly whether this is voluntary questioning, or whether the word "offering" is quite off the mark, because the unemployed will be required to enter this statement? Finally, is the Paymaster General aware that such a multiple written inquisition of those who are suffering the first shock of losing their jobs is wholly contrary to our tradition of free play and fairness?

Mr. Clarke: I can only advise the hon. Gentleman and any other hon. Member who is interested to look at the extremely straightforward and clear questions that are set out on the form. To describe this as an inquisition is a ridiculous misuse of language. Outside the House I have heard hon. Members refer to these as "trick" questions. The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) referred to them as hypothetical questions.

Mr. Prescott: Read them.

Mr. Clarke: Let me read them, as I am invited by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East to do:

"1. What are you doing to find work?
2. What job do you normally do?
3. What job are you looking for?
4. Are you willing to consider any other jobs?"

They are not trick questions.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood):
"Can you start work today?"

Mr. Clarke: Yes,
"Can you start work today?"—
[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Paymaster General is seeking to give information to the House.

Hon. Members: No he is not.

Mr. Clarke:
"Can you start work today?"
is an entirely clear, unambiguous and fair question. The law established by this House makes it clear that unemployment benefit is a daily benefit and that a person is entitled to it for those days when he is able to start work but cannot find work. These are straightforward questions which I suspect every Member of the Public Accounts Committee is likely to agree should have been asked before now. We have been paying out benefit to those who are not entitled to it. If somebody refuses to answer these basic questions, he is likely to be referred to the adjudication office who will make a decision on eligibility for benefit, as he usually does, in the light of his judgment of the person's eligibility for benefit. That is true of many benefits. If a person refuses to answer questions about why he is claiming benefit, he is likely to find that his claim is put in some doubt.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the House again that we have a very heavy day in front of us. I shall allow questions

on the statement until half past four, and then we must move on. I ask for brief questions. Perhaps that will lead to brief answers.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his statement. As he said, these obvious questions should have been asked all the way along. I urge him to progress further and to consider the introduction of a workfare system. That system has been very successful in many parts of the United States. It would provide work for those who genuinely want to work.

Mr. Clarke: As I understand it, workfare of the kind advocated by my hon. Friend is practised on any scale only in the state of West Virginia. I reserve judgment about whether it is successful there. I do not believe that it would be either suitable or necessary to introduce into this country a working-for-benefit system. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for this entirely harmless questionnaire. He is right to say, as he has been saying for some time, that we should have had some test of this kind before now. No doubt he shares my astonishment that the Opposition now appear to advocate the paying out of money to anybody who comes in and asks for it, regardless of whether he wants to work.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not cover other important parts of the Public Accounts Committee's report. We said that if more could be found out about the problems of the unemployed, we should then consider what action might be necessary and useful. If it could be established quite clearly that the questions would be effective without being oppressive, that would be fair. However, it is the oppressive nature of this questionnaire upon which we sought assurances that we have not received from the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Is he aware that the most important aspect is that substantial sums of money are lost to the Inland Revenue through tax fiddles and the like because the Inland Revenue does not have sufficient people to establish how much money is being lost? We have said again and again that if the Inland Revenue can assess how much tax fraud is costing the country, the DHSS ought to be able to make a similar kind of assessment to enable it to judge how many people should be examining this matter. It is the failure to do this that makes us suspect what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has in mind.

Mr. Clarke: I am a little disappointed that the right hon. Gentleman, who holds an extremely prestigious position in the House as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, whose 30th report on this subject is extremely clear, should be responding to political pressure and trying to put a novel interpretation on that report. The report to which he put his name says:

"The formal tests of availability for work are weak and we welcome the DHSS's decision to consider whether more effective tests are practicable."

The right hon. Gentleman asked about a survey of the extent of the problem so that we could justify the steps which have been taken. I refer him to the labour force survey that we carry out regularly. I have before me the figures for spring 1985. On the strength of that door-to-door survey, which was conducted in the privacy of the homes of those surveyed, 880,000 benefit receivers were inactive, as far as the surveyors could estimate: 260,000 had not sought work in the last four weeks; 360,000 would not like work; and 200,000 were already working. The report was justified and we responded to it. If the right hon. Gentleman says that it is onerous, I challenge him to cite a question that is onerous in its effect. This is a perfectly sensible application of the entirely sensible recommendation of the right hon. Gentleman's own Committee.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in so far as criticism can be levelled at him and his Department, it is that these excellent reforms were not introduced years ago? Is the Labour party really now advocating that taxpayers' money should be used to pay unemployment benefit to people who are not entitled to it? Is he aware that the policy revealed by the Labour party this afternoon will be deeply resented by the overwhelming majority of people, not least by the low-paid?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have here the transcript of an interview given by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on BBC television at lunchtime. It began with Mr. Martyn Lewis saying:

"I asked John Prescott whether the Government was right to make sure that unemployment benefit went only to people who are looking for work.

Yes, of course."

replied the hon. Gentleman. That leaves me utterly bewildered about what all this fuss is about.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As the Paymaster General has twice said that he is concerned for those who are genuinely eligible for benefit, and as the Government's figures show that 400,000 unemployed people are eligible but do not claim, when can we expect the right hon. and learned Gentleman to make a statement announcing help for that group?

Mr. Clarke: We are not changing the rules of entitlement to any benefit. They are exactly as Parliament always prescribed. People entitled to benefit will continue to get it. We find that people claim unemployment benefit when they are entitled to other benefits. Our officers will refer such claims to the office which pays the benefits to which they are entitled. There is an increasing take-up of benefit. Colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Security and I welcome that.

The odd fact is, however, that recent surveys have shown that the number of people who are looking for work has fallen steadily for some time whereas the number of people who claim and receive benefits has been increasing. We now have a rapidly increasing number of jobs in the economy, and the biggest number of vacancies since 1979. It is only common sense to pay benefit to people who are genuinely unable to find work.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): Should not the House reflect that, if people were refused unemployment benefit as a result of the operation of this questionnaire, we are a humane society and do not drive people to die of hunger or into total destitution? Everybody in Britain enjoys a guaranteed minimum income of one type or another.

Would not the time now be right to consider the possibility of introducing a tax credit scheme or, as I would prefer, a basic income guarantee scheme, so that people who are not really available for work would not find it

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

necessary to apply in this way, but could manage with their small resources without the need to go through this casework?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is quite right. People entitled to other benefits will get them. I have long had sympathy with my hon. Friend's advocacy of a much simpler system such as tax credits and the eventual unification of the tax and benefit systems. That proposal continues to be examined by all who are interested in this subject. If we could simplify the system, we might enable the Opposition to understand the matter more clearly, and perhaps get their approach to benefit rules somewhat more in order.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Will the test apply to people who, for health reasons, can do only certain types of work? What consultation has there been about the test with the organisations of disabled people?

Mr. Clarke: There will be some people who are not available for work because of ill health. They will almost certainly be entitled to sickness or invalidity benefits. They will be advised of that and referred to the DHSS.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the wide public support that there will be for his action, not least because there is general public sympathy with the plight of the unemployed and concern that their benefits should not be cut? There is general sympathy for the proposition that people in receipt of unemployment benefit should be properly analysed. The changes will be welcomed.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am quite sure that people want us to pay benefit to those who satisfy the test that Parliament has laid down. Most people regard it as quite absurd that we make no sensible inquiries to ensure that people qualify.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is not the questions but the interpretation of the answers that we are worried about? We are also worried about the instructions that have been given to supervisors to exclude people from the register if they do not answer the questions to their satisfaction. We are more concerned with the answers than with the questions. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is hypocritical to make a statement about a list of questions concerning people's availability to travel to work and their desire to seek work when there is more than 30 per cent. unemployment in my constituency, more than 18 per cent. unemployment in the county, more than 16 per cent. unemployment in the country and more than 11 per cent. unemployment in the nation? It is a daft set of questions.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for saying that there is nothing wrong with the questions. That is a big advance on the stance taken by his Front Bench and by the Liberal party. If he believes that there is something wrong with the treatment of the answers, I invite him to examine the guidance that we are giving adjudication officers. He will find that it is wholly in accordance with the law laid down by the House and the judgments of commissioners. I will make it available to any hon. Member who does not have a copy. People who cannot get work will continue to get benefit. We are not changing the rules. This is an argument about a sensible administrative change.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The Opposition appear to be arguing that it is somehow oppressive to ask somebody whether he can start work today. Surely it is only the man who is busy in the black economy who has anything to fear from that question.

Mr. Clarke: We would be completely neglecting our duty to taxpayers if we did not ask such a plainly obvious question. Those who cannot answer yes are not entitled to unemployment benefit. Every hon. Member has gone along with that law since at least 1948.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Does the Paymaster General agree that he can expect the type of response that he has received from these Benches as long as he and his colleagues in the Conservative party pander to the myth that the overwhelming majority of the unemployed are scroungers? They are not scroungers, and he and his colleagues would do well to stop pandering to the myth that they are and to confront the real problem, which is providing jobs for people who are on the dole.

Mr. Clarke: I am not aware of any colleague, certainly not one for whom I am responsible, who has ever referred to a majority or a significant proportion of the unemployed as scroungers. [HON. MEMBERS: "Archer."] The number of people working in the British economy has been rising steadily for each quarter during the past 13 years. Last month, we had the best figures for falling unemployment since April 1979. We now have the largest number of vacancies notified to us since early 1979. As the Opposition parties begin to lose arguments on the real economy and employment, they are beginning to turn to obscure arguments about administration.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Central): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that his questions will not be objected to by those who have nothing to hide? Indeed, they will be welcomed in areas of high unemployment such as the north-east as people there want help concentrated on those who are genuinely unemployed and seeking work.

Mr. Clarke: We piloted some of the initiatives to bring more help to the unemployed in my hon. Friend's part of the world. We first tried out job clubs in the north-east. We are to have 1,000 of them because they were so successful at helping the long-term unemployed get back on the way to work. We had a pilot scheme for the Restart scheme in the north-east, among other areas. It, too, is now helping the long-term unemployed. That is what the House ought to be debating—our positive assistance to the young and the long-term unemployed—but it is the Opposition who want to waste time on this sort of nonsense.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Will the Paymaster General understand a simple point? In areas such as mine, where even on the Government's manipulated figures, unemployment is running at 23 per cent., the public want not some new system of calculation, but a policy that creates real jobs. What is there in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement which suggests a change of policy which will get people back to work rather than pretend that people who are out of work are not unemployed?

Mr. Clarke: I have given the latest figures for the growth of new employment and mentioned the increase in the number of people in employment. I welcome the opportunity to come to the House to make a statement about the introduction of the two-year youth training scheme, Restart and the new policy initiatives that my right hon. and noble Friend announced last month. Those are the positive steps that the Government are taking.

I am making this statement because an Opposition Member got hold of some long-available literature about the administrative change, which we had distributed to our trade unions. The result is that the House has had its attention drawn to what I would have thought was a rather elementary step, taking heed of an all-party Committee's advice to ensure that we pay benefits only to those who are genuinely unemployed.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): So far as I can see, my right hon. and learned Friend is simply putting into formal writing what was previously asked orally. If it was not it should have been.

How often will the candidate seeking work fill in one of these forms? Will it be once for all? Will it be done every month, or every three months? My right hon. and learned Friend will understand that one of the difficulties for people who are available for work and who find work away is that they cannot afford to take it because they wish to keep the family together.

Mr. Clarke: Previously, only one question was asked which I will paraphrase as, "Are you available for work?" Of those questioned, 99 per cent. said yes. The Public Accounts Committee rightly pointed out that that was a rather dubious answer and that serious tests were required. That is what we have introduced.

The questionnaire will be used only for new claimants who apply for benefit. Experience has shown that of those who become unemployed, half move into new jobs within three months—that is the usual pattern in our economy. If they fall into the category—a fifth will—of becoming long-term unemployed, they will be given, after 12 months, an hour-long interview under our Restart programme and they will be steered back into the path of work. That will occur unless, at that stage, they reveal that they are not available for work. We are piloting interviews with people who have been on the register for six months to see whether it is worth while to extend the Restart programme.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will allow questions to continue for a further five minutes on this important matter but then we must move on.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Will the Paymaster General comment on why 20 employees from unemployment offices in the north-west, seconded to a course starting next week, should be staying at the prestigious Adelphi hotel in Liverpool at a charge of £36 a night? Their aim is to stop people claiming legitimate expenses through unemployment benefit. The age of the super-snooper has arrived when the Minister's Department can spend out £36 a night to train these people for a week which equates to £3,600 per week. That is twice the amount that a single claimant would take two years to acquire. The Government should be spending resources in Liverpool where one in four people is underpaid, where £20 million is unclaimed and the staff of unemployment offices are already stretched. When will the Government do something in that direction?

Mr. Clarke: I thought the hon. Gentleman usually discribed as snoopers those people who took part in fraud investigations. I know he objects to such investigations, but we believe that it is right to investigate the fraud that occurs.

This questionnaire is quite a different matter. It is not right that it is depriving benefit to those who are legally entitled. These questions and the guidance we have given are merely to ensure that the law, as laid down by this House, and last restated when Labour was in power, is properly applied. Those who satisfy the criteria for entitlement will, of course, get benefit.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that not only do those people who are genuinely seeking work have absolutely nothing to fear from the changes that he has outlined, but that it is positively in the interests of those who are seeking work — including the category referred to by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), those who are entitled but are not claiming—that those who are not genuinely seeking work should not receive benefit?

Mr. Clarke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. I believe that will be the reaction of the vast majority of British people if they follow this afternoon's exchanges.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): It is very interesting to see the Minister's air of injured innocence, especially after his bland statements.

Can he confirm or deny a report in *The Guardian* today that benefits will be denied to newly unemployed people if they cannot make arrangements to take care of a disabled relative? Will he recognise that such a proposal would be not only shocking but unrealistic because when he was Minister for Health he and his colleagues did nothing to improve community care for severely disabled people?

Mr. Clarke: On this occasion, I shall not be drawn by the right hon. Gentleman's last outrageous allegation, but I do not agree.

The questions are designed to ensure that people are available for work. People who are not free to take work on the day for which they are claiming are not entitled to benefit. The House has always ruled so. I have not heard any Opposition Member say that he or she wishes to see the law on entitlement changed.

With regard to the care of disabled there are other benefits available to which the disabled person or his carer may be entitled. During our period of office, we have made a vast improvement to the range of benefits and their scales which are available to disabled people.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is in the interests of all genuine claimants that these tests should be fully effective? Genuine claimants should welcome an interview within 16 weeks as recommended by the Rayner scrutiny team.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. The person who is genuinely unemployed — who has been made redundant, is looking for a job but cannot find one— will share our opinion. He has a claim record and is entitled to benefit, and he would not wish to see that

[Mr. Clarke]

benefit going to someone who comes into the office but is obviously not available for work. Those who are genuinely unemployed feel just as strongly about this, as do many employed members of the public.

Ms. Clare Short: The Paymaster General has been less than fully honest with the House. He has told us that this is a simple tidying up exercise and is not a change in policy. However, the briefing note that went out to all staff in unemployment benefit offices — but not to hon. Members—stated:

"The experiments are showing that using the UB671 questionnaire . . . has reduced the number of claims made and increased the number disallowed."

That is what it is about and that is what the Minister told his staff it was about — reducing the numbers. [HON. MEMBERS: "So what?"] Let me explain to Conservative Members who do not understand anything about the processes that — [AN HON. MEMBER: "Come to the question."] Certainly I will.

I hope the Paymaster General can answer my question. One of the questions to be put to the long-term unemployed is:

"Can you start work today?"

That is asked of someone who has been unemployed for a year, two years or three years. That person might say, "I cannot start today because I have promised to do this or that, but I can start in a couple of days if there is a job for me." What happens to that person?

He will be asked:

"How far are you able to travel to work?"

What happens if he says, "I used to have a car but as I have been unemployed for so long I cannot travel very far now."

He will be asked:

"Do you have any adults or children to care for during working hours?"

What happens to that man if he says, "One of the joys I have had of being unemployed is that I have seen more of my children and have cared for them. I care for them during the day but if there is a job available I can make other arrangements."

He will be asked:

"What is the MINIMUM WEEKLY wage or salary (before deductions) you are willing to take?"

Will the Paymaster General tell us the minimum that people must accept or face having their benefits cut?

I was not alive in the 1930s but generations of my family have passed on to me stories about the wickedness of the means test. Generations of today's unemployed will pass on the story of how this Government frightened people out of the unemployment figures instead of providing real jobs for them.

Mr. Clarke: It is certainly the case that when we have tested this new system we have found that over 3 per cent. of people, when faced with the card that tells them that they must be available for work and with the other questions, do not pursue their claims.

I have spoken to some of our staff who tell me that some people did not realise that one had to be available for work before claiming unemployment benefit. We have also found that there are others who, when they fill in the form make it clear that they are not available for work and they are disallowed benefit to which they are not entitled.

The hon. Lady tried to show what was wrong with the questions, especially those she cited. There is a question which states:

"Can you start work today?"

The answer is yes or no but, if the answer is no, one is asked to explain why and say when one would be available for work. If the answer was, "Because I need a day or two to make arrangements to stop doing what I am doing"——

Ms. Clare Short: They stop their money.

Mr. Clarke: No, they do not—of course they do not — *[Interruption.]* It appears that many hon. Members want to answer the question, but it is not especially complicated. The form is phrased in a way that allows people to explain why they cannot start work. If it is obvious that a person is not available on certain days, he is not entitled to benefit. That is the law that was restated by the Labour Government.

The form asks:

"Do you have any adults or children to care for during working hours?"

The person has to tick either the "Yes" box or the "No" box. If the answer is yes, the next question is

"can you make IMMEDIATE arrangements for their care if you get a job?"

If that person can make immediate arrangements, he is available for work and therefore entitled to benefit. However, if he proposed to stay at home and look after his children, which is a perfectly free choice, he would not be eligible for unemployment benefit. That has always been the case.

On the point about the wage that people want, the test is whether what they are seeking is reasonable in their circumstances and in the circumstances of the labour market where they live. People who will be disallowed are those who claim that they are available for work, but will accept only a minimum salary that is far above anything that they have earned before or could reasonably hope to earn, or above the going rate for the sort of jobs, for which they are suitably qualified, in the locality in which they live. That is not a change in the system—it is existing law. Parliament has always supported those rulings. The questions are clear, straightforward and not oppressive.

I challenge the Opposition to say whether they would withdraw these questions and simply return to one question that would give all the money to anybody who came through the door of the DHSS office.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I realise that this is a highly contentious matter. It is not possible for me to call every hon. Member who wishes to contribute. However, I have a list of those who I have not been able to call, and I shall give them preference when we return to this subject, as undoubtedly we shall.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the difficulties under which you operate, but is there no mechanism in this House whereby clandestine operations, like the one that has just been described to us, can be communicated to hon. Members whose constituencies are affected? Many of us have been under a great deal of pressure during the weekend because of the Government's proposals.

Mr. Speaker: I doubt whether there is a constituency in the country that this matter does not affect. It is clear that if every hon. Member was called we would not move on to the next subject of business for today, which is very important. I think that the whole House would agree that hon. Members wishing to take part in that debate have an equal right to the available time.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

4.41 pm

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the three motions relating to statutory instruments. The Question is that the three instruments be referred——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: I am trying to raise a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Mr. Skinner: It is a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not care—I am on my feet.

The Question is that the three instruments be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. As many as are of that opinion, say aye——

Mr. Powell: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Is there an objection?

Mr. Powell: I was hoping to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to put the motions separately so that it would be possible to object to one of them.

Mr. Speaker: I shall do so.

Ordered,

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 4) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1352) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Motion made, and Question put,

That the draft International Fund for Ireland (Immunities and Privileges) Order be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Powell: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Does the right hon. Gentleman have the support of 20 hon. Members?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall put the Question, and it can be subject to Division if hon. Members so wish.

Question agreed to.

Ordered,

That the Highlands and Islands Development Board Area Extension Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

EUROPEAN DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

INTRA-COMMUNITY TRADE

That European Community Documents Nos. 9453/83 on intra-Community trade in bovine and pig semen, 11403/85 on intra-Community trade in meat products, 6364/86, 6365/86 6366/86 and 6367/86 concerning draft proposals for a new approach to harmonisation in the field of foodstuffs and the draft proposals by the Commission of the European Communities described in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's unnumbered explanatory memorandum of 9th July 1986 on food flavourings, be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Question agreed to.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

4.43 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is this a genuine point of order or a continuation of the previous questions?

Mr. Skinner: Yes, it is genuine, if you will allow me —[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] This will not take too long.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that last Thursday there was an altercation in the House—to which I did not pay any special attention—when the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) walked out. Subsequently, there were a couple of points of order that petered out. I was not present yesterday to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) raise a point of order requesting a personal statement about what the right hon. Member for Chingford had threatened in the House and then said outside. I have been looking at the different statements made both inside and outside the House. I am one of those who are quite prepared to follow the suggestion of the right hon. Member for Chingford and repeat outside what I say in here. I have always believed in that.

However, I have a problem. When the right hon. Member for Chingford stormed and flounced out—I make no point about that, because it is his business—he said, and I quote, "The witness approached Mitchell." Three hours later, he changed that to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I can help the hon. Gentleman. What the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) said outside the Chamber is not a matter for me.

Mr. Skinner: I am coming to my point, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, I was quite prepared to take on the right hon. Member for Chingford, but three hours after having made his statement outside the House, he changed it and said that in fact Mitchell had approached the witness. We need to know exactly what the right hon. Gentleman is saying outside the House. It would not be a bad idea if he came inside the House and made a personal statement. You can have a say in that, Mr. Speaker because a personal statement is not like a ministerial statement. If the right hon. Gentleman did that, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington and others could challenge him. We want to know exactly what he means. Hon. Members could challenge him in the House and then I could challenge him outside, just as he cleverly suggested last Thursday. I think that it is important that the House has that statement before it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking to be called on the next debate, because many other hon. Members are.

Mr. Winnick: One of the problems that was pointed out yesterday—[AN HON. MEMBER: "What is the point of order?"] It is a point of order. As was pointed out yesterday, it is extremely difficult to question the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The right hon. Gentleman has made a provocative statement. I know that that has absolutely nothing to do with the Chair, but we

now believe that Tory Central Office was probably involved in a conspiracy. We are not in a position to question the chairman of the Conservative party because, although he is in the Cabinet, he answers questions only four times a year, for about five minutes each time.

I am not in any way bringing you into the dispute, Mr. Speaker, but it is clear that the right hon. Gentleman has accepted some responsibility by responding to the point of order last Thursday. It is said that Members of Parliament have the right to question Ministers in the House and should not demonstrate outside. However, on this issue we find ourselves in some difficulty. When will we have the opportunity to challenge the right hon. Gentleman on what he said last week so that we can demonstrate that it was not true?

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Gentleman—and he would be the first to realise this—that provocative statements are frequently made in Parliament. That is not new. I am not responsible for the Conservative party any more than I am responsible for the Labour or Alliance parties. This is not a matter for me and I cannot help the House. I must tell the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that is he wants to find out what the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) means, he had better do as he said and, in his own words, take him on.

Pig Slurry (Control)

4.48 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision for the control of pig slurry and for connected purposes.

The Bill has three aims: to assist small and family farms with an interest in pigs, to monitor future developments in separate intensive industrial units, and last but not least, to provide safeguards for people and the countryside against pollution.

Pigs comprise approximately 25 per cent. of the national farm livestock, and it is interesting to note that these pigs are housed in about 7·5 per cent. of livestock holdings. Furthermore, a large proportion of the pig industry is concentrated in the eastern and north-eastern counties of England, with some 1·6 million pigs in Yorkshire and Humberside, 24 per cent. of the total in England and Wales.

Disposal of slurry is a major factor in the breeding, rearing and fattening of pigs. Current methods of disposal are varied and virtually every method has some disadvantages. Guidelines from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food state:

"mechanical separation of slurry is generally carried out as a pre-treatment or conditioning stage. The act of separation does not improve or reduce odours. Its main purpose is to remove much of the coarse solid from the effluent."

I do not wish hon. Members to get too bogged down by this topic but detail of some methods is relevant to the subject. Some farmers have taken the initiative and installed equipment that separates out the larger solid particles so that it may be composted before being applied to the land. Unfortunately, the capital cost of providing the necessary plant is quite high, and is probably beyond the means of the smaller farms' resources.

Other farmers dispose of slurry using the traditional splash-plate tanker, which has the advantage of being a basic, simple design and therefore relatively easy to maintain. It operates quite fast and has comparatively low capital costs. Its main disadvantage is that it can often cause a public health nuisance.

Rain guns are the least favoured solution, as high-level spreading is likely to increase the risk of droplets being carried by the wind beyond the targeted area. This system is operated by pumping slurry under pressure through movable distribution pipes and spraying it high in the air. Under calm conditions, which are the optimum for all slurry disposal, a sampling of a rain gun's effects was found three quarters of a mile downwind. Under windy conditions, heavy bacterial pollution has been traced as far as five miles downwind

Bearing in mind that slurry should not be applied to land close to residential areas, a stipulation that may shortly be endorsed by law, this method constitutes not only a nuisance risk but an environmental hazard. It should probably be phased out over several years, when the existing equipment can be written off.

One of the latest and the most efficient methods is by injection. Here, the slurry is injected directly into the soil via pipes placed behind the coulter cutting blades. This method is extremely effective in controlling odour, its main disadvantage being the high cost of the equipment. I have observed the disposal of some 2,000 gallons of slurry by injection in a period of three minutes, and the method may be accurately summed up as " out of sight,

[Mrs. Elizabeth Shields]

out of mind", for there is neither visible nor olfactory evidence of its existence. The only disadvantage apart from the cost of this method is that there are some types of soil for which injection is unsuitable.

Many farmers employ a solid manure system for their pigs. The latest figures from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service estimated that 660 kg of straw or other absorbent bedding material is needed per annum per bacon pig to retain all its waste products. The advantage of this method is a considerable reduction in smell, although it means that wherever possible there should be a regular cleaning out of pens. However, it is probably easier for the small pig farmer to dispose of pig manure in this solid form.

One of the chief disadvantages of slurry is its smell. All country dwellers accept the inevitability of certain smells associated with agriculture, but when they waft into more sensitive nostrils of the urban public, or unduly assail rural dwellers in their homes, then in England and Wales the law defines the interpretation as a form of a nuisance.

Under the Public Health Act 1936, the word "nuisance" is a fairly flexible one, permitting different interpretations in different places and at different times. The nuisance of slurry smell is of great concern because it has an all-pervasive odour that it would be a euphemism to describe as a "fresh country smell".

I recognise the nutrient value of slurry to the land, but the problems of pollution connected with its disposal are likely to increase with expansion in the relatively new industry of separate intensive pig production, especially when it is unrelated to the traditional husbandry of the land. In view of the possible loss of amenity from slurry disposal which is associated with a high density of pigs in any one area, it is essential that adequate land is available for spreading.

The Royal Commission's seventh report on agriculture and pollution made many recommendations, and drew conclusions that were submitted to the Government. Recommendation 46 states:

"Intensive livestock units should be regarded as industrial enterprises."

This is of particular relevance where many separate pig units, which are in no way connected to a local farm, have been established as no planning permission is required for an agriculture building up to 5,000 sq ft. This means that there is often insufficient suitable land under an owner's control available for spreading slurry and if agreements with a local farmer are not possible, transportation to another area will be necessary.

The Ministry's aim is to achieve a practicable balance between the protection of the environment, especially from water pollution, and the economic production of food. Considerations of the need to avoid pollution of water courses

"impose a limitation on the maximum rate at which manures may be safely spread on land."

In 1985, incidents of farm pollution from such causes as inadequate storage capacity, leaking or bursting stores, land run-off and so on, totalled 313. While this is a far lower number than that for pollution associated with cattle, for example, more advice and consultation would reduce the total to an even lower level.

Numerous local authorities, chiefly district and borough councils, have to deal with such agricultural problems. Many farmers have already responded to requests to improve their methods of slurry disposal, but the concomitant problems still make this a high priority. It is important that the whole matter be given due consideration, for the popularity with British families of pork, bacon and ham is likely, and quite rightly, to ensure that our pig industry continues to grow and prosper.

Guidelines to take account of the production, storage, transportation and disposal needs are required on a national scale and would help to clarify and facilitate these issues. To this end, my Bill proposes to set up a pig slurry advisory board, to which reference can be made in all matters relating to the above.

The board would co-ordinate the many sets of guidelines and recommendations that are in circulation from the Ministry, the National Farmers Union, the regional water authorities and local councils and, having regard to circumstances in different parts of the country, would seek to eliminate the existing irregularities and anomalies. The board would also have powers to give grants to defray costs of expensive equipment, especially for small or family farms unable to provide the necessary capital. Decisions concerning slurry in all its aspects would be referred to the advisory board. In the interests of the public generally, representation on the board would ensure a wide range of opinion and expertise from producer to consumer, with a sufficient number of members to protect the public interest.

The overall aims of the board would be to provide support and free advice for new entrants, as well as for those already in the industry, to consider the problems of environmental impact and repercussions and thus to work for the maintenance of good relations between farmers and other countryside dwellers.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in Mrs. Elizabeth Shields, Mr. Richard Livsey, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. Richard Holt, Sir Russell Johnston and Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

PIG SLURRY (CONTROL)

Mrs Elizabeth Shields accordingly presented a Bill to make provision for the control of pig slurry and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday and to be printed. [Bill 223.]

Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure

5 pm

Sir William van Straubenzee (The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: There is a great deal of interest in this Measure. I appeal to hon. Members, particularly as we have had such a late start, to make brief contributions.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I should like to express my appreciation of the fact that we are talking, although for a shorter time than we would wish, about these matters in what I think the media call prime time and not in the early hours of the morning. I express appreciation also for the petition in support of the Measure, which was so ably presented to the House and supported by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). I shall seek to do my duty to the House and explain the Measure briefly. If I omit relevant points, perhaps the House will be forgiving.

The Measure, consisting of five sections and one schedule, is a simple one. It confers powers on the General Synod to make provision by canon for the ordination of women deacons. Section 2 confers a like power to end admission to the order of deaconesses, save, of course, those women already admitted. Section 3 has consequential pension provisions which I feel sure, whatever view it has of the Measure, the House will warmly approve. So that the matter may be clear and without any doubt, I draw attention to the specific provision in section 1(4):

"Nothing in this Measure shall make it lawful for a woman to be ordained to the office of priest."

I commend the Measure on a number of grounds. It seems to be acknowledged by scholars—of course, as the House well knows, I certainly am not one—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] I think that we were let off. In the early Church, the diaconate was open to men and women. That is well-documented. Members combined a service of community caring with leadership in Church worship. As recently as 1862, Bishop Tait's ordination of the first person to the office of deaconess was held to be a restoration of an ancient order. There is, therefore, historical continuity, which makes the office separate and distinct from any holy orders.

The 1978 Lambeth conference, and its predecessor, asked member churches which do not ordain women as deacons to take the necessary legislative and other steps to do so. The policy is already in operation in the Church in Wales. I understand that there are moves in this direction in the Scottish Episcopal Church and in the Church of Ireland. As part of its place in the Anglican communion, the Church of England is anxious to respond to this request.

I am grateful for the fact that the House is so comparatively full for a discussion of this matter, because sometimes outside the Chamber there is anxiety that it is no longer concerned about it. This is patently not so. Many hon. Members know that an increasing role is played by deaconesses of the Church of England, although they are lay women and not in one of the holy orders. They play a substantial role in public worship and in the general life of the Church. Their role is almost identical to that of the deacons, alongside whom they work. They assist in worship, they are trained together, and very often they are either ordained or commissioned in the same service.

The major function which deaconesses cannot perform at present and which differentiates them from the deacons is officiation at a marriage. I suspect that the famous man or woman in the pew would be hard-pressed to say what the difference in function is. They are not clergymen within the definition laid down by the House, and cannot at the moment officiate at a wedding service. If the House, as I hope it will, assents to my motion, once the canon comes into force, they will be able to officiate at a marriage.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is it true that a male or female deacon may give a conditional blessing, but not a full blessing? I ask my hon. Friend to lay on the line, as I think he has done, that this is in no sense to be seen as a move towards the ordination of women. I say that, not to express a view, but because I think that that matter would create a deep schism in the Church, and the Church is not ready to consider it.

Sir William van Straubenzee: My hon. Friend is right on his first point. On his second point, I would not have been straightforward had I failed to draw attention to the fact that one effect of the Measure and the canon that goes with it is that women are to be admitted to the holy order of deacon. A deacon is a clergyman and, by the law of the land, because of Parliament's decision, a clergyman can officiate at a wedding.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does my hon. Friend agree that a deaconess is at present two steps away from the priesthood? She cannot officiate at a marriage ceremony and she cannot administer the holy sacrament. Is it the case that if the Measure is passed a deaconess will be only one step away from the priesthood?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The two facts given by my hon. Friend are, as the House knows, absolutely correct, but the point on which I part company from him, in a friendly way, is over a deaconess being so many steps away from this or that. The office of deacon—perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to say this more fully in a moment—is one of distinction in its own right. It ought not to be considered an automatic step in this or any other direction.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead: Would it help the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) to be reminded that, instead of thinking of steps towards the priesthood, should the Synod pass a Measure allowing women to become priests, the House would have to consider it separately from this one?

Sir William van Staubenzee: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. There can be no question of there being women priests in the Church of England without Parliament giving its assent to, I take it, a Measure broadly along the lines of this one. I want to concentrate on the Measure concerning women deacons. No legislation will come before this Parliament in relation to women priests.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): The point is that many hon. Members see this as an inevitable halfway house towards the ordination of women into the priesthood. Will my hon. Friend confirm that when men become deacons, unless they act reprehensibly or in some way fall beneath the standard, they will inevitably become

[Dame Jill Knight]

priests, whereas no matter how exemplary the conduct of a woman who has become a deaconess, she cannot become a priest? How does my hon. Friend think the Equal Opportunities Commission will react to that?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I have been trying to deal with a technical but important point, which I know troubles some hon. Members, which was picked up by the Ecclesiastical Committee. However, in view of the questions put to me, I shall reverse the order of my remarks.

I accept and understand that for many people, both inside and outside the House, looming behind this issue is the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood. They use the thin edge of the wedge argument or the inevitability argument. It is true that it is normal practice for a male deacon to be moved to the priesthood. In the diocese of Portsmouth and elsewhere much thought has been given to this. There has been a study by the House of Bishops for a permanent diaconate for men. The status of a deacon is seen to have real point in the modern Church and there are a few, but only a few, who want it.

I think that I can best set the mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) at rest by saying that it is impossible completely to remove a suspicion, but the House has in front of it, in the report of the Ecclesiastical Committee, the voting figures of the General Synod on this matter. It is fair to say that the vote was overwhelming and to draw particular attention to the fact that at final approval, or as hon. Members would say, on Third reading, 36 bishops voted in favour and none against. For example, there were more votes against in the other two Houses, but they are not substantial and they are set out.

It is inconceivable that in the General Synod many people who, to my certain knowledge, are completely opposed to the ordination of women as priests, did not have in their minds the point which my hon. Friend fairly made. They were satisfied that the matter could stand on its own. However, if I am pursued and told, as I sometimes am, that the General Synod is a totally unrepresentative place—a charge which I reject—I can point out that this Measure and the canon were referred to 44 diocesan synods and that 42 of them approved. I am entitled to persuade the House that at what I can legitimately call grass roots, persons who unquestionably feel strongly that women should not be ordained as priests, nevertheless see the Measure as separate and distinct and as a step which ought to be taken on its own merits.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the figures in the report show clearly that the overwhelming majority of the Synod are in favour of this Measure? Does he not agree that that shows that this is a matter which ought to be left to the Church? I speak as an Anglican, because I get upset when I come into the House of Commons and find that all sorts of people who are not members of my Church are discussing and voting on issues which relate to my Church. I object strongly to that.

It is time that these matters were settled by the Synod of the Anglican Church. Ultimately this means disestablishment, which is necessary for the Church. The figures in the report underline my point that we ought not to be discussing this matter. It should be settled by the Synod, and if the Synod wishes to go further and ordain women as priests—with which I agree—that ought to be done.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Whatever else is in this Measure, there is nothing in it about the disestablishment of the Church of England. We must deal with the situation as it actually is.

I understand the feelings of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). However, as he is a fair-minded man I am sure that he will not want to imply that that is the generally accepted view of the Synod. The General Synod both understands and has pride in the fact that in many instances it must come to Parliament for approval of its Measures, with the comparatively recent exceptions of worship and doctrine. I would not wish to leave the House, especially those who are opposed to this Measure, feeling that there is resentment on the part of the General Synod, because that does not exist.

My final point is narrower, but equally important. I am sorry to take up time, but I think that the House expects it of me. The Ecclesiastical Committee noted a difference which it felt ought to be exposed, and its report ably deals with this matter. At present a prayer is said at the ordination of a deacon, who must by definition be a man, which is generally known as the collect for the higher ministries. It foreshadows that a deacon may proceed to the priesthood. The rubric introducing it says that it "shall" be used. The Ecclesiastical Committee pointed out a conflict between this direction and the statement in the Measure, to which I have drawn attention, about the inapplicability of it to women as priests.

Therefore, the General Synod listened to the Ecclesiastical Committee. I am sometimes told that the General Synod does not listen enough, so I hope that on this occasion at least we shall get marks for having listened. The Synod amended the canon to provide an alternative rubric. This does not alter the prayer, but it does alter the rubric if it is a woman deacon who is being ordained.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who always adds such great intellectual weight to our debates, has asked me to explain to the House that he is unavoidably absent abroad. This is unusual for him. He has authorised me, as the person who led this point in the Ecclesiastical Committee, to say that he acknowledges that this change has been made at the request of the Ecclesiastical Committee, and on this point his reservations have been removed.

With the exception of conducting a marriage service, a deaconess in the Church of England today performs the same functions as a deacon. Many feel that where women perform the same functions as men they should have the same status. That is a matter separate and distinct from any question of the ordination of women as priests. Supporters of the Measure include persons who have strong views hostile to the ordination of women as priests. Surely it is out of keeping with a 1986 view of women that they should be accorded a status inferior to men, that they can only join a lay order and that they are denied the special grace of being in one of the holy orders. It is in that spirit that I commend the Measure to the House.

5.20 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): This is an important debate because it raises far wider issues than the one raised

by the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) in presenting the Measure. We are, as Parliament, first responsible—apart from our relationship to the Church of England, to which I shall refer—for the rights of women in Britain. We are also bound to consider, because the Measure deals with it, the attitude of the Anglican Church towards women. But also, necessarily, because of the nature of the Measure, we are bound to consider the legislative relationship of the Church to Parliament and, inevitably, the issue of the establishment of the Church. I want to touch briefly on some of those questions.

The campaign for the full ordination of women in the Church of England is not a new one but a very old one indeed. It was 70 years ago that Maude Royden sought permission to be ordained. It was refused and she became an assistant at the City temple in London, where she continued to preach until her death.

In the same year, 1916, Constance Coltman was the first woman to be ordained as a Congregational minister and she practised as a minister. The ordination of women since then has spread over a wide number of denominations.

I must admit to the House a long family interest in and connection with the ordination of women. In 1920 my mother, now in her 90th year, joined the League of Church Militant, the name of the organisation then seeking the full ordination of women. She was summoned to Lambeth palace in 1926 by Archbishop Randall Davidson and told that it was impossible that women could ever be ordained into the priesthood. Following that came the Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women, which continued to argue the case, then the Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church, of which Bishop Montefiori was the Anglican chairman and my mother was once the Free Church president. Now we have the Movement for the Ordination of Women, which has been arguing the case in the Synod.

I would go further. During the war the Reverend Lee Tim Oi, a Chinese woman, was ordained by Bishop Hall of Hong Kong because in wartime circumstances nobody else could administer the sacrament in his diocese. It is to the eternal disgrace of the Church of England that after the war it threatened to withdraw its financial support from the Church in China unless the Reverend Lee Tim Oi resigned, which she did. She visited Britain a little while ago.

Meanwhile, other denominations accepted women as ministers. If I may be allowed one other family reference, 40 years ago this year my father, as Secretary of State for Air, appointed the first woman chaplain to the Forces, a Congregationalist, the Reverend Elsie Chamberlain, much against the opposition of the then Archbishop of Canterbury. When the Air Force list was printed he found, to his rage, that his officials had listed her as a welfare officer. He had the Air Force list pulped and reissued showing her as a full chaplain in order to establish that the rights of women could not be dismissed in that way.

Since then, Anglicans have accepted the ordination of women in other countries. There are women priests in the United States of America and the Episcopalian Church in Australia. They have been considering the appointment of a woman bishop in the United States and it is not impossible that at the next Lambeth conference the Anglican community will have to receive a woman bishop as a full member of that conference and the Archbishop of Canterbury will have to receive her in that capacity.

Mr. Frank Field: What about the Measure that we are debating?

Mr. Benn: If my hon. Friend will be patient with me, these matters need to be put upon the records of Parliament.

The only churches that do not acccept the ordination of women in England are the Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Church of England in England. It is only the Church of England that resists the matter.

It is not for me, for a reason that I shall come to in a moment, to go in detail into the argument within the Church of England, beyond saying that the Bishop of London has played a wretched role and was recently censured in the Church for his intervention in a parish in the United States. He has stirred up prejudice against women in an established church which, I might add, is presided over by a monarch who is a woman, where the bishops are appointed by a Prime Minister who is a woman. Yet the hon. Member for Wokingham begs the House to believe that under no circumstances under the Measure, and he is correct, could a woman become a priest. That is the background against which we have to discuss the matter.

There has always been prejudice and obscurantism in relation to women's matters, but there is much sympathy. Everybody is always sympathetic to the principle—but not now. That was the way in which the House discussed the women's vote and now we are invited today to vote for a Measure that explicitly makes it unlawful for a woman to be a priest, and that has to be taken into account.

One of the factors — I can only say this from observing the scene—that leads the Church to object to the ordination of women is a fear of prejudicing reunion with Rome, although there is an Alliance for St. Joan in the Catholic Church and, judging from the speed with which the Catholic Church has moved on many matters, it is not inconceivable that it will ordain women before the Church of England gets round to it. But that is a matter for speculation.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North) *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I have very little time, and I am being non-controversial, so I shall not give way.

It is against that background that we are invited to examine this puny little Measure. Of course, for women who believe that progress step by step is better than nothing, they may say that when they are deacons they will be a step nearer to becoming priests. But, as the hon. Member for Wokingham made clear, and as paragraph 1(4) makes clear, the opposite is the case. Section 1(4) of the Measure makes it clear that

> "Nothing in this Measure shall make it lawful for a woman to be ordained to the office of priest."

Therefore, I can well understand the attitude of those women who believe that this is a gain and that the House should vote for it because it is a step forward. However, I hope that those who take that view will accept that the argument used to get it through will be that it is the very opposite. Not only is it the very opposite for women, but now we are told that there may be a new type of male

[Mr. Benn]

deacon who will never go any further. We are creating a special class of second-class men to go along with the second-class women in the Church of England.

The opposition to the Measure that we will have in full force in the course of the debate highlights the central question—the absurdity, drawn out by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer)—that Parliament, the Members of which do not have to be Anglicans or even Christians, has the final word in deciding whether women should be deacons, priests or bishops in the Church of England. It is absurd for the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who is a member of the Synod, having lost in the Synod, where at least he is surrounded by members of his own denomination, to appeal to Parliament, where anybody could be Catholic, Jewish, Sikh, Muslim or humanist, to defeat that Measure. That is what makes the establishment of the Church of England unacceptable.

The political control of the Church is a total anachronism. Over the years there has been quite properly a distancing between the Synod and Parliament and a greater formalisation of our relationship. But it is the Prime Minister who appoints the bishops. Anyone who has read the recent scandalous stories about the Archbishop of Canterbury must know that it was hoped that he would resign because of those stories, to pave the way for a more acceptable archbishop appointed by the Prime Minister—[HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] I give that as my opinion. If the Archbishop could be forced to resign, the Prime Minister could appoint a more acceptable Archbishop. That is why the Conservative party, which believes in privatising everything, but keeping the Church of England——

Mr. Greenway: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not unacceptable for the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to stray so very wide of the Measure?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I was about to reproach the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) for straying away from the Measure.

Mr. Benn: With great respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not the first time that I have made this point. I spoke about it on the Bishops (Retirement) Measure. This issue on which we are asked to decide highlights the manifest absurdity that Parliament should have any rights in the matter. If any hon. Member were to suggest that establishment is so successful that we should nationalise the Catholic Church, the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church and the Jews, people would say that it was a gross abuse of spiritual freedom and they would be right.

We are a nation of many religions and of none. This House is a Parliament of many religions and of none and the time has come to complete the steady progress of separation between the Church of England and Parliament. When the new Session begins, I intend to introduce a Bill based upon the Welsh church——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will leave his speech on that matter until the new Session, if he should then catch Mr. Speaker's eye. I hope that we can return to the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure, from which we seem to have strayed.

Mr. Benn: It would not be the first time that matters on the relationship between Church and state have aroused controversy in the House and interventions from the Chair——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to keep interrupting the right hon. Gentleman, but I hope that those matters will not be discussed during the debate on this Measure, in which many hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Benn: I bow to your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but no objection was raised when I made a similar point on the Bishops (Retirement) Measure a few months ago——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was not in the Chair on that occasion. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will stick to this matter.

Mr. Benn: I abide by your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I must say that Members of this House have no moral right to vote on this Measure. I cannot vote against it because it represents a tiny step forward, although it is also an entrenchment of a law designed to see that that step cannot lead further. I cannot vote for it for the reason I have given.

Historically, all gains by women and all gains of progress in religious freedom have been achieved when people did something, not when they pleaded, as women have done for 80 years or more, with bishops, parliamentarians and the Synod to listen to them. If women wish to be ordained as priests in the Church of England, they must be ordained abroad or invite people who have been ordained abroad to preach here, as happened with the recent service in Church house in Westminster.

I am fully committed to women's right to be priests and bishops in the Church of England. I deny Parliament's right to prevent that from happening. Women who want that right must follow the course of the suffragettes and others who fought for their rights. Only that course will create the circumstances in which women can enjoy their full rights within the Church.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has widened this debate considerably and not uninterestingly. However, we do not have much time for the debate. Will you rule, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the House is considering the ordination of women to the diaconate, not the ordination of women to the priesthood? Will you narrow the debate to that specific point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House will have heard my reproach to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will bear that in mind when speaking in the debate.

5.35 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I listened with fascination to the fairly long speech of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). As someone who opposes this Measure, I found that speech a great support and help. Some months ago, when I first considered the matter, I was in favour of it, but in recent months I have reached the considered opinion that it is a dangerous Measure and it is the House's duty to oppose it by exercising its judgment, which is its constitutional right.

Hon. Members are a sort of longstop to the General Synod, to which I belong. In some ways we more truly represent the man and woman in the pew than do some of the activists of the Synod who are not, as we are, elected by direct suffrage but who are elected indirectly. The House is usually at its best when discussing ecclesiastical Measures. Many non-Anglicans and, indeed, non-Christians are most anxious to try to be helpful and to do the best that they can for the Church of England. Church and state, if no longer one in England, are certainly closer than some people believe.

The voting in the Synod was heavily in favour of the Measure. However, the fundamentals of Christian doctrine cannot be established by mere majority voting. Surely in the Church of England, as in the entire Catholic church, scripture and tradition are our only guides. If we approve this Measure, we shall be sending out a signal from this House to all England and to the Anglican communion throughout the world that this is but one stage in the process of the ordination of women as priests. In the discussion in the Ecclesiastical Committee, Earl Waldegrave and others made the same point.

The Measure will not necessarily create women priests eventually, but the general public do not read the small print. They, especially those who read the popular papers, will believe that after the Measure is passed it will only be a question of time before women can become priests. That would be a serious step which would have to be approved by the entire Catholic Church in a general council. It would also cause a fearful split in the Church of England, as it has done already in the Episcopal Church in the United States and elsewhere. It might fatally injure the Church.

In saying that, I am not opposed to women in general of women in public life. Everyone with a knowledge of church history must know the tremendous part that women have played in the Christian story. Furthermore, I fully recognise the value of the work done by deaconnesses. I also salute those women such as our Prime Minister—*[Laughter.]*—who have attained the highest positions in the land. But the diaconate and the priesthood are quite different; they are not secular appointments. We all know that women are different from, and complementary to, men. But I have found some of the pressure groups that are in favour of the priesthood of women extremely distasteful. Ecclesiastical politics should not be as rough as secular politics, and should not use the same pressure group techniques.

Finally, the Church of England must get back to basic Christianity: to preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, helping people to ask for forgiveness for their sins, and to teaching us all how to pray. Both in the House and in the Synod we spend a lot of time on less important matters, such as this measure, or even conditions in the Third world, South Africa or the atom bomb. We need a new John Keble to preach a new Assize sermon before the Church of England, if it goes on proposing changes so quickly, completely vanishes from the land, with churches left empty and the people of England engulfed in heathenism, looking up but not being fed.

As an addendum, I must point out that a change in a collect in the ordination service in the Book of Common Prayer will prove necessary if the Measure is passed. That book has already almost vanished from the Church's services and is available, in my experience, in only about one in six parishes. If this Measure is passed, I wonder how many more changes to the Book of Common Prayer will follow.

I hope that hon. Members' wisdom, common sense and experience will lead us to reject this Measure. I believe that it would drag the Church of England, which we all love so much, further into the Slough of Despond.

5.41 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I have a personal interest in this Measure, as I am a member of the Church of England by baptism, but a member of the Church in Wales by confirmation, and so, arguably, I have experience of both.

As the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) made clear, the overwhelming view of the parliament of the Church of England was that this Measure should be supported. It met with no opposition in the House of Bishops and gained more than 80 per cent. support in the synod as a whole. No one has argued that a principle of scripture applies to this debate. However, there is a historical principle, which is that, as the hon. Member for Wokingham said, when the Church began there was a diaconate that included both men and women. Thus historical continuity is perhaps the firmest rock for arguing in favour of this Measure. Indeed, I believe that, as a result, it is impossible to resist the request made to us.

But there is another argument, which was put to the Committee by the Bishop of Rochester and others. That argument is that changes in society mean that there is a pragmatic reason for granting this request. On page 16 of the minutes, the bishop said:

"Thirdly, this Measure must be seen against the background of quite drastic changes taking place in the total ministry of the church. When I became a bishop 25 years ago I had 100 more clergy than today but I had only three deaconesses, no women readers and no laity of either sex authorised to assist at Holy Communion. Today, I have 23 deaconesses, nearly 50 women readers and about 200 of the 600 laity authorised by me annually to assist at Communion are women."

An increasing number of women participate in the Church, so there is increasing pressure from women who feel called to participate in its ministry. As page 6 of the report says:

"It is quite out of keeping with contemporary views of the position of women in society that where men and women are performing virtually identical functions the women should be accorded a status inferior to that of the men."

In theological and spiritual terms, women who cannot be ordained as deacons are denied the concomitant privilege of being in holy orders with the special grace that that may confer.

The Christian principles of tolerance and justice should lead us to accept this Measure. Behind the debate lies the question whether such a Measure would make more likely the ordination of women to the priesthood. But all hon. Members know that our procedures and those of the Church mean that the two issues have taken parallel but different courses. It would be wrong to allow one's adjudication of this Measure to be influenced by what might happen.

Certain things are fundamental, and certain things change. There is an awkward theological debate about whether the ordination of women to the priesthood raises a fundamental issue or merely reflects a change. As a result of the Pauline attitude to women and the teaching of St. Paul, that is a very difficult argument. I can see no

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theological reason against women becoming priests. However, the Church has made it clear that that argument should not be adduced today. As the hon. Member for Wokingham said, well-known senior members of the Church of England have made it clear that they are against the ordination of women to the priesthood but are happy to vote for this Measure.

It has taken a long time for this provision to reach the House. The committee set up by the Lambeth conference recommended to it in 1920 that this Measure should be taken. It took another 58 years, until the Lambeth conference in 1978, for the conference to resolve that such a step should be taken. As we have heard, the Church in Wales took the same step in 1980, and the Episcopal Church in Ireland and Scotland is well on its way. Progress has been slow, and even in very recent history, there have been delays. I do not criticise that, but it has been frustrating.

People have written to me, and no doubt to other hon. Members, reminding me how disappointed women will be if the measure does not succeed. Women who have been working as deaconesses and who have been doing the same work as their male counterparts in all but one material respect will be very disappointed if the House says that the status appropriate to what they do is not available to them. After all, they feel called to do their work.

The report makes it clear that there are also practical considerations. Men and women who train for work in the Church as deacons and deaconesses now train in the same theological colleges. That was not so 20 or 30 years ago. They have similar functions, and the number of men and women involved is much more equal.

As the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) said, a change will have to be made to a collect, because at present it suggests that ordination as a deacon automatically leads to ordination as a priest. That would have to go. That is the clear implication, if we are creating, as Portsmouth diocese has pioneered, a new tier of people who will remain deacons. We have created a new tier of lay workers or non-stipendiary ministers, and the Church is always seeking to expand the number of those working in its ministry.

Most important, it would be a gross abuse of the rights and authority that this House has over the Church if it told women that they were to be deprived of equal treatment, especially as the House is even more dominated by men than the General Synod is. Historically, it is accepted that women in the Church can be deacons.

This is a measure whose time has well and truly come. We must remind people that if they are afraid that precipitate moves in the other direction might split the Church, so there is a terrible fear among those of us who are concerned for the Church as a whole, that to deprive a large number of women who feel called will also weaken the Church in its own way.

If we are about maximising the ability of men and women to preach the gospel of love and justice — the Christian gospel—we must maximise the contribution of as many people as possible. To deprive women of equal status to do that would weaken the Church and reduce in number and in commitment the forces of those who are seeking, with status and authority, training, dedication and vocation, to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth.

I hope that the measure will be overwhelmingly supported.

5.50 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I come to the same conclusion as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). Politicians are often accused of speaking in code — of talking energetically about one subject when thinking about another. Leaving aside examples nearer home, a classic example of that was when Chairman Mao turned his fire on Confucius, who had been dead 2,500 years, to launch the cultural revolution. The same argument is true of this Measure. The argument has nothing to do with the ordination of women deacons, but everything to do with section 1(4) of the Measure. It is like the skirmish of Fort Sumter before the great conflicts of Shiloh and Gettysburg. My analogy of civil war — and American civil war at that — was deliberately picked. No one will appreciate the topical reference to that more than the Bishop of London.

Those who wish to block the Measure are really concerned about women priests, or even women bishops. That is the truth and everyone in the House knows it. It is the classic wedge principle argument, which was clearly articulated in the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Committee. The House should refuse to break that code and should solemnly take the Church at its word. Both the Bishop of Rochester and the secretary-general of the Synod urged the Ecclesiastical Committee to accept the measure on its merits rather than to see it as a Trojan horse from which would jump an army of priestesses to divide the Church of England.

If it is seen on its own, there is an unanswerable case for the House to pass the Measure tonight.

First, the Measure presents no theological problem. As a High Churchman, I sought the guidance of two very senior bishops in the Catholic wing of the Chruch. Both confirmed to me that there were no theological objections to the ordination of women to the diaconate and that no bishops opposed the measure. Both bishops are strongly opposed to women priests. Speaking as an Anglican, I respect the guidance of bishops on matters of order and doctrine. It is to those who stand in the apostolic succession that an ordinary Christian must look for guidance on the Catholic faith, rather than to majority votes in the General Synod.

It is plain from the early history of the Church that women undertook this service of physical and spiritual support. Although the first seven deacons were men, Paul's Letter to the Romans refers to Phebe as a fellow Christian who held office as a deacon in the congregation at Cenchreae. The actual words are "Ousan Diakonon Tes Ekklesias"—being a deacon in the Church. The author of the First Letter to Timothy, be it Paul himself or one of his disciples, equates equally the conduct of deacons and their wives. Some readings of that text when translated use the word "deaconess", as a footnote in the New English Bible puts it.

Mr. Tony Banks: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that reference, but what about Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, which seems to challenge the point?

Mr. Latham: The hon. Gentleman must give the reference.

Mr. Banks: I refer to chapter XIV, verse 34.

Mr. Latham: I think that the position of Phebe is quite clear—being a deacon in the Church. That is sufficient evidence.

At a meeting in this building last week, I asked the Archbishop of York if ordaining women to the diaconate would cause any problems with Rome. He assured me that it would not. Pope John Paul himself has made it clear that the ordination of women priests would be a major stumbling block, but since Rome unfortunately still regards all Anglican orders as invalid through defect of intention, perhaps that should not be our most immediate worry.

There are no serious practical objections. To all intents and purposes, deaconesses already carry out all the functions of deacons except marriage, which deacons hardly ever carry out anyway. They can conduct funerals. They can, of course, baptise—any layman can do that—and they can take any service except communion.

The Bishop of Rochester told the Committee that in 25 years the number of lay people authorised by him to administer the chalice at communion had risen from none to 600, of whom 200 are women.

As a layman, and not even licensed as a reader, I have a certificate of authorisation from the bishop of my diocese to administer the chalice, and I am likely to undertake that great duty at least twice before the end of this year. If I can do that without any formal training, surely it is reasonable that a man and a woman who have received identical and lengthy training at a theological college as deacon and deaconess, and who will in practice carry out the same duties after the bishop has laid his hands upon them, should be treated equally in canon law.

The truth is that the Church needs all its human resources, both clergy and laity. There are no serious objections to allowing women to be ordained as deacons. Having said that, and believing that the House should allow the Measure to pass, I must add that I am not impressed with some of the defensive arguments which have been used in its favour. Certainly, I see very little prospect of a permanent male diaconate, or any obvious point in it, despite the talk about experiments in Portsmouth and so on. Equally, those who say that the Church should sort out whether it wants a permanent diaconate before ordaining women as deacons are in practice asking for indefinite deferment. I doubt whether the Church has the slightest intention of seriously addressing that issue directly. It will be left, I am sure, to the decisions of individual bishops and individual candidates for ordination as deacon.

Some men may, indeed, decide to stay as deacons, but I cannot see why there should be any hard and fast rules about that. A man may initially have intended to remain a deacon, but if he feels the strong call to the full ministry of priesthood, assuming that he is suitable, I cannot envisage a bishop refusing to ordain him priest after the normal examination. I cannot see any prospect of deliberately creating a permanent male diaconate just to balance the women deacons. What would be the point of it? Certainly it would have no theological virtue.

Obviously there are women in the Church, and indeed men, who hope that this Measure will be the first step towards women priests. But they may be disappointed. There is certainly no guarantee that such a Measure will command the necessary majority in the Church for it to be presented to the House. That would be a very different step from what we are being asked to do tonight. To a significant body of opinion in the Church, that would be a major theological impediment.

It is worth remembering that these are issues about which committed Christians feel very strongly indeed. On matters of faith, Christians throughout 2,000 years have followed the words of the Apostle Peter—we ought to obey God rather than man. I do not believe that the General Synod or this House has the unilateral power to change the order of priesthood which belongs to all Catholic and orthodox Christendom. I believe that a major issue of faith and order of that kind can be settled only by inter-Church agreement and preferably by a general council of the Church. That is how all the greatest issues have been resolved by Christians and how the Holy Spirit led the Fathers of Nicaea, Constantinople and Chalcedon to define the doctrine of the Trinity itself. While that might seem an impossible or visionary suggestion for divided Christendom, there has been so much progress in recent years that no one should rule out a great step of that kind.

We can all recall the Pope and Dr. Runcie praying together in Canterbury cathedral four years ago. Who would have dreamt 25 years ago that that would even be possible? The Emperor Constantine was not even baptised when he summoned and personally presided over the Council of Nicaea. It is doubtful that he was ever really a believing Christian. His successor was an Arian, and he in his turn was followed by Julian the Apostate.

It was through such unpromising material at that time, however, that the doctrine of the Trinity was defined. Who are we to say that the mind of the entire Church cannot similarly be discovered in God's good time, which may not be very long? Men and women no longer kill one another over whether the Greek letter iota occurs in a Greek word, but that does not mean that devout Christians do not feel strongly about their faith. The nuns and priests who went to the Nazi gas chambers in place of others were showing that the Holy Spirit is still stronger than man's cruelties and barbarities. We can and must avoid the dangers of yet more splits in Christendom.

Women have waited for 2,000 years before being called to the Christian priesthood. If it is God's will that they should be so called and thereby to the episcopate as well, we can all ponder and pray a little longer until this great matter can be resolved by the Church as a whole. It is not for the Anglian Synod or for the House, in my view, to force the pace. It is worth remembering one of the few rabbinical sayings in the New Testament attributed to Rabban Gamaliel, which is as follows:

> "If this idea of theirs or its execution is of human origin, it will collapse; but if it is from God, you will never be able to put these men down, and you risk finding yourselves at war with God."

No harm will be done to the unity of the Church or its doctrine and order by letting this Measure pass. We should do so, however, on the very conditions which the Church itself has offered—that women deacons are appropriate and right, but that the issue of women priests remains to be resolved.

6.1 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Unlike the hon. Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who intervened in his speech, I do not believe that the House is called upon to

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resolve any profound issues of theology or to investigate the relevance of the early history of the Church. I think that we are called upon to exercise the function of a legislature; the legislature for the time being perhaps of the Church of England, but still a legislature with a duty to make sound law and law which achieves only the intended purpose and the purpose that is desired by those who put it forward. It is on that ground, and not without assistance from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), that I would argue that it would be right for the House not to pass this Measure.

In accordance with both the wording and the rubric of the ordinal on which clerks in holy orders are ordained, it is made clear that the order of deacon is a prelude to the priesthood. There is no doubt about that, and that is clear in the wording of the Prayer Book. There is a general feeling, which has been referred to already, that that link of a diaconate with the other holy orders is to a large extent, and increasingly, obsolete, and that it would be right for men and women to be able to perform on equal terms in the Church those offices that are associated with the title of deacon or deaconess, and to do so without any commitment or necessary connection with the intention or likelihood of proceeding to be priested.

If such a Measure were proposed, I would feel that it should be accepted and would heartily agree with it. The fact is, however, that the General Synod has not proceeded in that way. It has not produced for our consideration a Measure which creates a new diaconate separated deliberately from the rest of holy orders and a diaconate in which, as is right and proper, women and men may be on an equal basis. Instead, it has proceeded in an entirely different way by seeking authorisation for women to become deacons, of which the meaning and significance is unambiguous, which means that they thereby become clerks in holy orders.

Like most hon. Members, I have studied with great care the report by which we are assisted from the Ecclesiastical Committee. I think that everyone who has done so must be impressed by the anxieties that were felt by the minority, who remained unable to recommend the Measure to the House, as well as by the circumstances in which the Committee as a whole brought itself to do so. I want to refer to the condition by which the rest of the Committee — the majority within it — consented with obvious reluctance to commend the Measure to the House. This was that the General Synod should itself approve a canon which would alter the Prayer Book and thereby alter the worship and doctrine of the Church of England.

If we pass this Measure on the basis of an assurance that the law of the Church of England will be altered by canon, we are in effect illicitly devolving the legislative function of the House in relation to the Church of England in a way which was not envisaged 12 years ago when the worship and doctrine Measure was passed.

The issue of the priesting of women is one which has not been resolved by the Church of England. Indeed, during the period in which the Measure before us was in gestation there was observable a considerable change of pace, if not of heart, in the General Synod. It seems incumbent upon us, therefore, not now to put on the statute book of the Church of England a Measure of which the clear and logical implication is that it shows an intention to proceed to the admission of women to the order of priesthood.

After all, if we pass this Measure, what is the answer to the question, "Why, rather than permit the Church of England to have an order of deacons unconnected with the priesthood, pass a Measure which specifically makes it possible for women to be admitted to the order of deacon?" We should be obliged to recognise that in doing that by implication we have passed a Measure which decides by a side wind a major, fundamental and far-reaching issue which the Church itself has not decided and on which it has made no request to the House.

The time may come when we shall have before us a Measure which directly addresses itself to the question which I have posed. In the meantime, I think that we should do wrong by the Church of England, by the people of the Church of England, by the General Synod and by our function as legislators if we passed a Measure which by implication abridged the debate which has not yet been concluded, and by implication reached a decision which is not before us to take. I hope that we shall not do that this evening.

6.7 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): The House has been invited to approve a Measure which has already been approved by the Synod, but it has not come straight from the Synod to the House. I remind the House, as we have just been reminded by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), that the Measure has been considered by the Ecclesiastical Committee. That is not a Committee which has an especially high profile in this place, and perhaps it is as well to remind ourselves that it is a somewhat unusual body in that it is a Committee of both Houses. The House might be aware that 15 members are appointed by the Lord Chancellor—those are Members of the other place—and 15 members are appointed from this House by Mr. Speaker. The purpose of the Committee is to examine carefully the Measures that are passed by the Synod and presented for Parliament's approval.

It has been my privilege over the past few years to be a member of the Ecclesiastical Committee. In the short time that I have been a member of it I have been impressed by the attention which it gives to Measures and the diligence with which it approaches its work. It spends a good deal of time examining each Measure carefully and, having done so, and if it is not entirely content with that which is involved, it notifies representatives of the Synod to appear before it to be cross-examined in as effective a manner as any witness is cross-examined before a Select Committee. In this instance representatives of the Synod, led by the Lord Biship of Rochester, were cross-examined most carefully about the intentions and thinking behind this Measure.

One result of that cross-examination was the comments in paragraph 7 on page 4 to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) has already referred. As a result of our discussions an undertaking was given that the collect that comes at the end of the service would not be used when women were being ordained as deacons so as to remove any possible doubt whatsoever as to the intention of this Measure. In this respect—here I take up the point made by the right hon. Member for South Down — the closing words of paragraph 7 state:

"It is a point to which the Committee attach considerable importance and their opinion that the Measure is expedient is given on the assumption that this modification to the draft canon will be made."

If my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham is responding to the debate, perhaps he will give us that assurance, as that change does not appear in the schedule. I understand that it will come subsequently.

As a result of the most careful examination, the Ecclesiastical Committee has recommended that the Measure is expedient. It was not a decision reached with reluctance, as the right hon. Member for South Down implied. There were certainly one or two reservations among individual members, but it was a clear decision reached by the Committee after the most careful consideration.

Of course this House and the other place have the last word, but I suggest that the House should not lightly overturn a conclusion of the Ecclesiastical Committee, which studied this matter most carefully on its behalf.

The issues of priests and deacons are very definitely separate. That has been said not only by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham and the synod but by others including the Bishop of London whose views on the ordination of women as priests are very clear. He has indicated that he is in favour of this Measure. The Roman Catholic Church has made it clear that if women became ordained priests in the Church of England that could erect a substantial barrier towards closer relations between the two Churches, but to the best of my knowledge it has raised no objection to this Measure.

After all, what are we talking about? The fact is that both deacons and deaconesses play an important and increasing part in the affairs of the Church. As has already been said, the only difference between deacons and deaconesses is that the latter cannot perform marriages simply because of the wording of the Marriage Act.

Women deacons would acquire no new functions or jurisdiction other than the one that I have just mentioned, but their status would be comparable with that of a male deacon. They still cannot proceed to the holy order of priests. They can remain deacons as males may remain deacons. As has already been said, there are increasing steps towards the idea of permanent male deacons who in my view could perform an extremely useful service in the church.

All this must be apparent to the man in the pew if he simply examines the facts that I have summarised. But what will it look like to the woman in the pew if this Measure is lost? To put it mildly, it will look like a studied, calculated slight. Although the synods of the dioceses support the Measure by an overwhelming majority; although the bishops support it unanimously; although this policy has applied in the Church in Wales for the past five years; although increasing reliance is placed on deaconesses to hold the parishes together; and although women greatly outnumber men in the congregations, it is being suggested that the admission of women to the order of deacons is to be banned simply because they are women.

If this Measure is lost tonight the reputation of deaconesses will certainly not suffer, but the reputation of this House will.

6.14 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I am glad to have the opportunity for a few minutes only of contributing to the debate, particularly as I am a woman Member of Parliament and, after all, the debate is about the ordination of women.

In May this year I had the pleasure and honour of sponsoring an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall entitled, "What are Women doing in the Church of England". I see from the nods opposite that some Conservative Members may have looked at that exhibition and benefited from it. I found it most rewarding.

The exhibition sought to make a contribution to the process of breaking down the stereotyped images of women that persist both inside and outside the Church of England. For many people the image of the Church remains that of a male-dominated institution with women — as they do in other walks of life — carrying out traditional servicing tasks such as flower arranging, cutting the sandwiches and making the tea. As with so many other areas of life, women in the Church fulfil those basic and essential tasks.

In addition, however, they are also fulfilling the role of deaconesses as full-time parish workers and church social workers. We must emphasise the very real contribution that deaconesses are making in that way. There are women as hospital, prison, college and even armed services' chaplains. In fact, the number of women offering themselves and being selected for the ministry has doubled over the past 10 years.

In common with women in every sphere, women in the Church of England bring their own strengths and wisdom to their work. Sadly, in common with women everywhere, their contribution is often undervalued, unrecognised or, at worst, rejected. The debate that has been aroused by women seeking ordination as deacons in the Church of England has mirrored the many historic struggles that women have waged over the years, and the prejudice and hostility that has been expressed by some who oppose this Measure has also been evident at every stage of women's long march towards the very modest goal of equality.

Equality is a concept that women have been forced to extract bit by bit — from the removal of women's common law status as minors, to the right to enter the universities and the professions, the Married Women's Property Act, the vote, the right to stand for election and the right to equal pay for work of equal value. Every right had been fought for by women for women, and nothing has ever been given without a fight. We are still struggling to eradicate injustice against women, and I am proud to be part of that struggle.

Each small triumph for women has, then as now, been accompanied by dire warnings of the consequences for women and men — indeed, for society as men believe they see it—that will result from such challenges to the so-called "natural order". It is truly amazing that so little regard is given to the profoundly offensive and deeply wounding effect that such remarks have upon women—and they are offensive and wounding. It is even more amazing to hear what can only be described as an almost primitive fear of this Measure from members of an institution whose constitutional head has for the past 30 years been a woman.

We know that the Queen appoints archbishops and bishops on the recommendation of the Prime Minister—another woman. We have Her Majesty as defender of the faith; yet women are not acceptable as deacons. They are

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acceptable as servicers and defenders of the faith—with a small "d"—but they cannot enter the heart and soul through holy orders.

The Measure is a modest one. It has already been passed by the General Synod and with overwhelming majorities in the Houses of Bishops, Clergy and Laity. Virtually all members of the Synod, down to the grass roots level, have overwhelmingly supported Measures to ordain women as deacons. I am sure that right hon. and hon. Gentlemen and Ladies present will have had letters from bishops and ministers. We have had pleas from our localities to pass the Measure.

Many hon. Members have pointed out that the Measure clearly distinguishes between the issue of women as deacons and that of women as priests. Women as priests is a matter which we may or may not come to at some subsequent stage. As the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) said, we are discussing the ordination of women deacons, and that is what I shall stick to, as I hope all hon. Members will.

I should like to read a brief quotation from Deaconess Diana McClatchey's evidence to the Ecclesiastical Committee. She could not have put it better when she said:

"At the moment a woman and a man who have been trained together and who have done exactly the same preparation and have passed out of theological college together kneel side by side at an ordination service; both receive the prayers of the congregation for their respective offices of deacon and deaconess. Hands are laid upon them. One rises a clerk in Holy Orders and the other remains a lay person—it is as simple as that—even though they will go and do the same thing in the coming year."

I feel sure that the House will not turn its back on the overwhelming support for the Measure which comes from the Church of England, nor on the 600 or so deaconesses who await our decision—a decision of this, I have to say, male-dominated House of Commons. The decision is also awaited by many women who are not deaconesses but members of congregations, and women who are not members of congregations. The matter is of deep concern not only to deaconesses and churchgoers; it affects the dignity and status of every woman in the country. Each advance affects us all. In asking the House to pass the Measure overwhelmingly, I ask hon. Members to remember that.

6.22 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Unlike some of my colleagues, I am no theologian, but I shall make three observations. The first is that it never ceases to interest me when I behold the point at which people decide that they will stop in their consideration of life. For example, I believe that some of the voices we have heard against the Measure would have been heard equally well against translating the Bible into the common tongue or against the proposition that the Gospel should be taken to the gentiles. Where we stop in the evolution of God's grace is much more a matter of personal predilection than one that has any real doctrinal basis.

I speak in this debate partly because my grandfather was a member of the 1920 committee that recommended that women should be ordained as deacons. He went on later to be rector of St. Margaret's Westminster.

Secondly, I am interested in people's anxieties about splits in the Church. It is some six years since my aunt retired as a minister of the Congregational Church. While she was entirely clear about her calling as a minister of the church, the Church of England in which she had been born and brought up would not allow her to practise her calling. When we in the Church of England look towards the unity of the Church, frequently we look too much to the Roman Catholic Church and too little to those churches, that are expanding all over the world, which have left the Anglican communion or have grown out of the Anglican communion partly because of the rigidities that we have forced on it.

Thirdly, there is some anxiety about the rate of change. Perhaps I can put it this way: it is a long time to wait for the thick end of the wedge if we are only at this late stage considering the possibility of restoring the position as we understand it to have been in the early stages of the Church, before women ceased, probably about 150 AD, to be recognised as deacons. For those reasons, and others that I shall not go into in this short debate, I shall support the Measure.

6.25 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I would not normally intervene in such a debate—I shall keep my remarks to a few points—but, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I do not believe that we should debate measures such as the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure in Parliament, mainly because we live in a multi-creed society. Against that background, it can be seen as socially divisive to maintain an established Church and have a state religion which allows politicians at Westminster to poke their secular noses into matters which might concern them in their congregation but should not concern them in Parliament.

I shall be pleased to see the day when the Church of England becomes disestablished and we can leave Church matters to the Church. I shall not enter into that argument at this point, because it is very much for the future. I wish to speak because I have a constituency interest. Newham has a dynamic deaconess called Ann Eastor. She is well known in our community. She undertakes all the pastoral work at St. James's, Forest Gate, with the exception of communion and marriages—I regret to note that fact—and she is in regular attendance at Newham general hospital giving support to women in the maternity unit. It is on her behalf, in addition to the obvious principle involved, that I shall support the measure.

Although the House clearly has the power to reject the Measure—as the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has invited us to do—I think that it would be both unwise and mischievous for it to do so, in view of the overwhelming support for the Measure in the diocesan synods, where 42 out of 44 approved it. Looking at the General Synod figures for the meeting in July 1985, one sees, as the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) said, that the House of Bishops voted by 36 to nil, which is a fairly hefty score. It included the vote of the Bishop of London. Quite frankly, if the Bishop of London votes for a measure, one can be certain that it is not revolutionary in any sense. The House of Clergy voted by 147 to 49 and the House of Laity by 137 to 34. Clearly, there is overwhelming support in the Synod and in the country as a whole.

I have read the evidence given to the Ecclesiastical Committee. I was especially taken by the points made by the Bishop of Rochester. He said, quite rightly, that this

development is part of a process which began in 1861 when the first deaconesses were authorised. At that time it seemed inconceivable to have a woman Prime Minister, a woman High Court judge or a woman Cabinet Minister. Women did not have the vote. We are talking about the position today. Women constitute the majority of the population. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) said, quite rightly, women are grossly under-represented in this House, both in terms of those who are right hon. and hon. Members and in the number of hon. Members present tonight. There is something absurd about this House, stuffed full of grey men in grey suits—I am one of them, so I do not dissociate myself from the comment—actually discussing something that primarily concerns the interests of women in the Church of England. What women are asking for is perfectly reasonable and acceptable in today's world.

The Measure affects the status of women in the Church. During the brief meeting that we had with the Archbishop of York, when the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) asked about early Church practice, I intervened to show that the Bible, rather like statistics, can produce any form of support that one wants for any argument at any given moment. Therefore, one will not quote the Bible as the source, although one could, by referring to Phebe in St. Paul's Letter to the Romans.

The case for the Measure is based not on biblical history but on modern day equity. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barking said, women are selected and trained in exactly the same way in theological colleges as men, but they are then treated differently when women are made deaconesses and are not in holy orders while men are made deacons and are in holy orders. If women become deacons, they will be entitled to call themselves Reverend if they so wish and to wear a clerical collar, although perhaps it would be offensive to give the term "dog collar" the feminine equivalent.

However, there are matters of greater importance because, as the right hon. Member for South Down said, as clerks in holy orders, women will be empowered to conduct marriage services. Deaconesses already have the authority to conduct burial services. They can send people from the world, so they should be able to join people together in happiness in the world. They will have the same authority and status as deacons currently enjoy. Equal status for equal work is a wholly reasonable demand, and we should support the Measure.

6.31 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): At this late stage in the debate, I shall resist the temptation to pick up some of the interesting side issues that have been raised; instead, I shall concentrate on two overwhelming reasons why the Measure should be rejected. I very much follow the line of argument adopted by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), but I wish to identify it in this way.

First, if the Measure passes, under the law of England there will be, for the first time, two categories of deacon. Hitherto, in the entire history of the Church, the orders of bishop, priest and deacon have been indivisible. If the Measure is passed, in the Church of England there will be two categories of deacon—first, those who can and will move on to the priesthood and, secondly, those who will be incapable, though deacons, of doing so. The distinction between the two will be entirely one of sex.

Men will, as now, be able to proceed, and normally will after one year, to become ordained as priests. Women, though deacons and able to fulfil the entire range of diaconate functions, will not be able to. There is little doubt in my mind that if we pass the Measure, because of that distinction, there will be those who will go to the courts and say that the Measure should be read alongside other statutes that lay down sex equality. In other words, there is a real danger that the main result of the Measure will be confusion arising from litigation. The House should be in no doubt that what is proposed is the creation of two classes of deacon—one male, one female. That cannot be right.

My second reason for asking the House to oppose the Measure is simply this. It was made clear in the discussions before the Ecclestiastical Committee that the Church of England was at this time considering a revision of the functions of the order of deacon. My hon. Friend the Second Church Estates Commissioner referred to experiments in the diocese of Portsmouth and elsewhere whereby it would be envisaged that certain deacons would not go on to the priesthood in due course, as is the usual, and indeed the almost inevitable, progression at present.

If that is so, and if the Church of England is looking for a redefinition of the diaconate order, that should be done before the House and the Church as a whole consider the role of women in that diaconate order. If the Measure goes ahead, we shall be putting the cart before the horse. Of that nobody should be in any doubt. It is probably the case that the Church of England is not considering too seriously a revision of the diaconate order. Indeed, there are no Measures before the Synod that would do that. Although an experiment may be taking place in the smallest diocese of the Church of England, it may be a long time before anything proceeds there.

For both those reasons, the House would be well advised to ponder and to realise that if we pass the Measure, we shall go down a wrong path. There are those who argue that it is hardly the business of the House. I am a baptised and confirmed member of the Church of England. I have been a church warden and am the son of a clergyman in the 45th year of his ministry. I glory in the fact that we have an established Church in this country. Again and again down the centuries Parliament has saved the Church from itself, from the time of the great Henrician statutes. I have no doubt that we have every right to say to the Church of England today, as Parliament has said again and again in the past, "You are wrong in what you are proposing. Think again." We should do so now on this Measure.

6.37 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Unlike the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), I wish to comment on the main themes of the debate. In doing so, I shall pick up the theme introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), because it is the first time in an ecclesiastical debate that I find myself disagreeing with him. There is always a danger in trying to simplify any of the right hon. Gentleman's arguments, and no doubt he will be quick to his feet if I distort some of what he was trying to say.

I thought that part of the argument that the right hon. Gentleman put forward in advocating the rejection of the Measure was that the Church itself had not thought out carefully enough the implications of what we were being asked to approve. As he said that, I was reminded of the

[Mr. Frank Field]

comment by Aneurin Bevan. He had been listening to the then Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, and said that the problem with listening to him was that it was like a trip round Woolworth's; everything is in place and nothing is priced over sixpence. In life, it is difficult to fit everything neatly into place. Indeed, it is wrong for us to think that God acts as super-manager of a local Woolworth's store.

I disagreed with the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), who made an erudite speech, in that his defence of authority seemed to leave out the basis that the Church in England claims for its authority, which is the Reformation. If we, in our supposed wisdom, were establishing a Church in this country, it is doubtful, given how many of us view the nature of a Church, that we would make it an established Church. However, that is how history has turned out, and as the hon. Gentleman said, the wisdom of that decision has been shown, in that on many occasions it has been the secular arm of the state that has saved the Church.

I have no hesitation in approaching the second theme of the debate, which was put so forcibly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Attractive as his invitation was for each of us to wander down memory lane with him on past achievements of women in the Church or the horrors of establishment, I beg us not to do so. I have voted against every measure of privatisation in the House and I view disestablishment of the Church as a measure of privatisation in that it would be taking something that belongs to the nation and giving it to the sects.

One of the sad things about the Labour party and the Church of England is that debate seems similar in both organisations. The thirst for the sect to have authority seems to know no bounds. We have every right and a duty seriously to consider every Measure put to us by the Church. If we believe that a Measure is unwise, we should reject it. We have not had such arguments in this debate.

In his speech the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes), as usual, put his finger on an important point, but, if he will forgive me for saying so, he did not take his argument through to a conclusion. He asked a question that is often in my mind about what constitutes the basis of authority within a Church. The hon. Gentleman mentioned two. One was scripture and the other was tradition. I am sure he listened carefully to the speech by his hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton. In that speech, the question was firmly answered on both criteria. In terms of scripture and tradition, and because of the evidence, we ought to give an overwhelming vote in favour of this Measure.

There is further evidence for an Anglican to draw on in the wish of the Lambeth conference to initiate this Measure. Some would say that it is a reactionary Measure because it goes back to what was rather than establishing something new. Given that we do not have synods of bishops in the Anglican community, our Lambeth conference is the nearest we can get to that. Anglicans listening to the debate ought to consider the request by most of the bishops of most of the Anglican communities in the world for this Measure to be accepted. We ought to consider that carefully before we vote.

The matter of authority, which is my third theme, was properly raised by the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge. The evidence put forward suggests that we should say that authority in scripture and in tradition is behind this Measure. That leads me to my last main point, the issue of women priests. That has been the backcloth to this debate and even those hon. Members who told me, though they are not present in the Chamber, that they would speak in favour of the Measure, made speeches about the ordination of women to the priesthood. The speeches were such that I felt that I could not have heard them correctly outside the Chamber and that they were trying to stir up the Government Benches to get a "No" vote.

Let us be clear. We are told that this Measure has nothing to do with the ordination of women into the priesthood. I hope that I will live as part of the Church to see women priests. I plead with those who will be campaigning with us for that Measure not to use the passing of this Measure as a reason for the ordination of women priests because there are other reasons for that. One of the main causes of anger in the House against the Synod is the highly political way in which it has presented Measures to us and has said that they are limited Measures and would not be added to. As soon as we have passed the Measures, as with the reform of the Prayer Book, the Synod has come back and said that we must concede a further reform, that we allowed it to do the experiments and suggested an alternative Prayer Book and that now we are denying it a reform.

I ask of those in Synod a standard of political debate of the sort that they expect from their elected representatives in Parliament and that they take the debate at its face value. This is not a debate about women priests but about a Measure to allow the ordination of women deacons. I hope that we approve of that Measure.

I shall conclude by touching on the point made by the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). He told the House about the deliberations of the Ecclesiastical Committee and he asked whether the canon was ready and prepared. The answer is yes. He told the House about the long and considered debates in the Ecclesiastical Committee about this Measure. The Committee concluded that we should approve the Measure, but it would be wrong for anyone to quote the figures of the Division on that conclusion. On practically every Measure that we considered in Committee some of us found ourselves in the minority. On this occasion as on others, the minority was such that the Measure could be recommended to the House.

In the light of the arguments that have been put forward I hope that the House approves the Measure. There is much evidence in scripture and tradition in support of it, and while we have every right to reject it, we certainly cannot reject it on the arguments that have been raised against it in this debate. I hope that the vote will result in a large majority for its affirmation.

6.45 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): We have heard some scholarly and profound speeches but my few words will be intensely practical. I shall not go down the road taken by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) by giving anecdotes about my family's association with the Church, although the eldest sons in my family have been priests in the Church for five generations.

Many hon. Members feel strongly about this Measure, but I wish simply to support the General Synod of the Church of England. This Measure does not open the door

to the ordination of women to the priesthood. We are told that until the 12th century the diaconate was a distinct and permanent order of men and women and that it was part of the Church's historic threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. The diaconate has its own defined duties and this Measure is simply a move to reassert the rightful status of the diaconate.

The report by the Ecclesiastical Committee says that the first deaconess in the Church of England, Elizabeth Ferard was dedicated in 1861 by the then Bishop of London. It goes on:

"The admission of women as deaconesses was seen not as a departure from doctrine or practice but as the restoration of a ministry of service known to the primitive Church. Dr. J. B. Lightfoot, who later became Bishop of Durham in 1879, claimed that 'the female diaconate is as definite an institution in the Apostolic Church as the male diaconate'."

This Measure will put an end to the glaring injustice, illogicality and indefensibility of the present situation about women. Women are selected and trained on the same basis as men in theological colleges such as my own in Salisbury and Wells. They do what amounts to the same job as men and are even ordained alongside men when the bishop lays his hands on them in the same way. Because of their sex, they do not become clerks in Holy Orders like the men but must remain laity sitting in the House of Laity and unable by the law of the land to solemnise or attest marriages. That is an important point because it is pastoral nonsense. Many deaconesses know engaged couples much better than the priest who will marry them.

If one reads with any feeling the report called "Faith in the City" and looks at the proposals for the increased work of women in the church, especially in our inner cities, one will sometimes be filled with despair. It is despairing to think that we could prevent a great deal of such work in future.

The present position is unacceptably vague about women. For example the "Making of a Deaconess" section of the ordination service is ambiguous. The status of deaconesses is generally ambiguous in that, although they function in every way as clergy, they are not clergy. If deaconesses go abroad to provinces that have women deacons, they may not even be allowed to preach, being regarded as lay readers. Such provinces include Canada, Kenya, the Episcopal Church in the United States, New Zealand, Uganda, Japan, central Africa, Wales, southern Africa, Ireland and Hong Kong.

I have received many letters on the subject—as, I am sure, have all hon. Members. I shall quote briefly from two of them, as they have struck a particular chord with me. The first is from a lady in my constituency who says:

"At present I am training alongside my husband at Salisbury and Wells theological college. Both he and I hope and pray that we shall be ordained together, as deacons in the Church of England, and therefore urge you to vote in favour."

The second letter is from a canon in my constituency who says:

"Most of my experience has been as a missionary in Central Africa . . . and in Africa it is urgent that the status of women in the Church be raised, and many communities bereft of men should have women leaders. The Church in ex-British Africa still takes its cue from the Church of England. Please excuse the inadequacies of this letter: it's the first time I've ever written to an MP, but it's a matter on which I feel strongly."

We shall be doing nobody a service if we reject this Measure.

6.52 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I am very glad to be taking part in this debate. I too, have received letters from constituents, including deaconesses who are serving in very deprived parishes. I am very glad to be representing them tonight, for they say that they wish to be ordained, as this Measure would allow.

It is important to emphasise that it is a limited Measure. It enables deaconesses, who now exercise their ministry as laywomen, to be ordained as deacons, not as priests. Also it enables bishops to ordain as deacons women who are training alongside men at theological colleges—a change that has taken place in recent years. Men and women now train together in theological colleges. They follow the same courses and receive the same qualifications. Therefore it is absurd that at the end of their training the treatment of women should be so different from that of men.

The Church treats lay deaconesses in the work that they do as though they were male deacons, yet they do not ordain them. Therefore, to vote for this Measure would put right an anomaly in the practices of the Church. Even more important, it would make it clear for the first time in English law that by virtue of her sex a woman is not thereby incapacitated from receiving the grace of holy orders. That is another reason why this important and significant step should be taken tonight. Other hon. Members have pointed out that it would be in line with the traditions of the Church of England.

Furthermore, it would also be in line with clear scriptural teaching of the kind upon which I was brought up. My father was a Baptist minister. My mother also conducted church services. She both preached and held holy communion services. The principles upon which I was brought up are clearly specified in the New Testament:

"In Christ there is neither male or female."

To vote for this Measure tonight would demonstrate that the House recognises that principle, as the Church is seeking to do by putting before us this Measure.

It is not only in terms of the traditions of the Church and the principles of scripture that I hope the House will pass the Measure. As other hon. Members have clearly stated, it commands majority support in the General Synod of the Church of England, in the dioceses of the Church of England and among the lay members of the Church of England. It will be welcomed by active members of the Church and also by those outside the Church who look to it for guidance on how to conduct their lives. Women have been second-rate citizens in the Church of England for too long. Tonight I hope that we shall take a small step towards putting that right.

6.54 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): This House is a legislative body and it has given certain statutory powers to the General Synod of the Church of England. Those powers favour the status quo. A change would require a two thirds majority in each of the three houses of the General Synod. If the General Synod passes a Measure, this House ought to endorse it, unless it touches on a wider constitutional issue—for example, the status of the Queen as head of the Church of England or the status of the Succession to the Crown Act 1707.

In the absence of a wider constitutional issue, this House should endorse a Measure that has been passed by the General Synod of the Church of England; otherwise

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

the General Synod will say to this House, with some justification, that although the Synod has applied its mind and intellect to a Measure that has come before it, the House of Commons, after only a very short debate, has overturned it. If we overturn this Measure, sooner or later we shall come into conflict with members of the General Synod. They will ask themselves why they should devote time, energy and effort to drawing up Measures that Parliament then overturns.

I do not challenge the integrity of my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) or his comments, but he has failed to convince other members of the General Synod about the strength of his argument. If he has failed to convince members of the Anglian communion who have taken a particular interest in theological issues, the House should rightly regard his comments with deep suspicion.

As a general principle, the House should seek to endorse the views of the members of the General Synod, unless there is a very good reason for not doing so. I was not elected a Member of Parliament for Banbury to exercise my judgment on issues relating to worship and doctrine. I am not qualified to do so. For that reason, this House gave such powers to the General Synod. Therefore we should follow its guidance. There is overwhelming support for this Measure in the General Synod of the Church of England.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) referred to the diaconate of the early Church. My hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge and certain other hon. Members are staunchly against women playing a greater role in the Church, but who was it to whom the resurrected Christ first appeared? Was it not, according to St. Mark's gospel, to Mary Magdalene? Why should Christ have appeared to her unless he believed that women should play a greater role in preaching the gospel? On grounds of theology, therefore, the House should support this Measure. However, the fundamental point is that, having given statutory powers and responsibilities to the General Synod, the House should endorse its decisions and support with confidence Measures that have been passed by it.

6.58 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I am a member of the General Synod. Nobody can deny the tremendous work that deaconesses have done over the centuries. I must observe, however, that the vote about which we have been told this evening was taken by the old Synod. There have been substantial changes in its composition since the election, and there are now more members of it who oppose the ordination of women.

The Measure will end the order of deaconesses. It is an important Measure, but it will bring about false hope among lady deacons as it is quite clear that this is the last but one step to being admitted to the priesthood. These proposals will create confusion in the Church——

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to the order [24 October].*

The House divided: Ayes 303, Noes 25.

Division No. 298] **[7 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Browne, John
Buchan, Norman
Buck, Sir Antony
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cockeram, Eric
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Couchman, James
Craigen, J. M.
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Crowther, Stan
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Durant, Tony
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Forman, Nigel
Forrester, John
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, W. E.
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heffer, Eric S.
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Jessel, Toby
John, Brynmor
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard

Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mellor, David
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Watson, John
Weetch, Ken
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Winnick, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Banks and
Mr. Tony Baldry.

NOES

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Conway, Derek
Farr, Sir John
Gow, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunter, Andrew
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Neubert, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stokes, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Powell and
Mr. Peter Bruinvels.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

Government Business

7.11 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the course of the last debate in the other place on the Housing and Planning Bill the Government were defeated on certain amendments moved on Third Reading. That followed defeats in the other place in Committee and on Report.

I wonder whether through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could ask the Government Front Bench to ask their colleagues whether we may have a statement tomorrow, in some form or other, on whether the Government are proposing to reverse specifically their view on the important matter on which they were defeated tonight—homelessness. It is a matter which has caused equivocation and concern in the past. More importantly, I request information about the expedition of business this week and next.

There are similar provisions and amendments in relation to the Housing (Scotland) Bill, which again has to complete its stages through both Houses before the end of this Session. If amendments are to be tabled with the normal two days' clear notice before debate in the House next week, it will be helpful if, before the business statement on Thursday, we know the Government's attitude to what has happened in the other place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Gentleman has made his point, which is now on the record. He will be aware that it is not a matter for the Chair, and there is no comment that I can make.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 October].

That the Promoters of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table with the New Clause as added on Consideration of the Bill as amended;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.

Question again proposed.

7.12 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have obtained a copy of a letter which has been sent by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, of European house, The Dock, Felixstowe, Suffolk. It is signed by Mr. George Blackhall, who describes himself as the managing director of that company. I ask you to rule on what I submit is a clear breach of privilege.

In the first sentence of the letter, which is headed "Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company Private Bill" Mr. Blackhall writes:

"Dear member, As I am sure you are"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he is raising a matter of privilege. If I have understood him correctly, I remind him that the procedure for raising prima facie breaches of privilege is to write to Mr. Speaker. If this is the case, he should write to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Boyes: I shall certainly do so but if I may just read the first sentence——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman cannot do that. I have explained to him the procedure for dealing with what he alleges is a breach of privilege. I invite him, straight away, to write to Mr. Speaker, who will consider his point and eventually give his ruling.

Mr. Boyes: I am seeking your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This letter is interfering with tonight's debate, at the end of which, I presume, there will be a vote. It is vital that there should be a free debate this evening, and I believe that this letter is directly interfering with the rights of hon. Members to take part freely in the debate. Mr. Blackhall is trying to influence hon. Members by referring to the delaying tactics of a small coterie of Labour Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am trying to help the hon. Gentleman. What he is saying may be relevant to the debate, but I wish to make two points. First, I have not seen the letter, and I think that it would be best if he could let me have the letter. I could then study it and perhaps give him further advice.

Secondly, hon. Members are free to make whatever comments they feel appropriate in the debate that is about to start.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If groups outside the Chamber attempt to put undue pressure on hon. Members, as the letter does, that is something to which the House ought to give some consideration before the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman appears to be alleging a contempt. If that is the case, he well knows that the procedure is to write to Mr. Speaker. I hope that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) will do so, and I invite him to let me have sight of the letter so that I can take advice. If there is any further guidance that I can give to the House after I have seen the letter, I will, of course, give it.

Mr. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was about to point out that not only did we receive copies of this letter, but that we had the interesting example of a three-line Whip being issued. I realise that it is entirely for hon. Members to decide whether to issue a Whip, but it appears to be a considerable breach of the usual procedures on private business, when hon. Members are supposed to act in a semi-judicial function rather than act in the way that they would in a normal debate.

The difficulty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that although you suggested that we should submit the letter to Mr. Speaker for a ruling, as it is especially germane to today's debate it would be far less satisfactory if the ruling were made after the debate than it would be if we could have some indication at this stage of Mr. Speaker's view.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already said that that is what I intend. I am at a disadvantage because I have only this moment received the letter. If there is any further advice that I can give to the House I shall certainly do so, but I cannot do so until I have read the letter.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to ask your advice. This is not the first time that this particular private company, when bringing an opposed private Bill through parliament, has impugned the integrity of hon. Members. I believe that we are entitled to your protection, because a slur has again been cast on the impartiality of hon. Members who served on the Committee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already dealt with that point. We have well established procedures in this House. If a breach of privilege is alleged, the hon. Members concerned must write to Mr. Speaker, who will deal with the matter and give a ruling at the earliest possible opportunity. There is nothing further that I can add, because our rules are very clear.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I wish to speak briefly against this carry-over motion——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I thought that the hon. Gentleman wished to raise a point of order. I realise that he has put down his marker to speak in the debate, and I shall look out for him.

Mr. Boyes: On a different point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. Is it possible for me to move the suspension of the sitting so that you have an opportunity to study the letter? I fully understand your earlier ruling, but because of the serious implications for the debate this evening I ask you to suspend the sitting while you study the letter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not prepared to do that. I have heard nothing that makes me think it necessary to suspend the sitting. Indeed, I suggest that we now get on with the debate.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the debate I shall wish to quote from a document that has been issued by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, but which is marked "Copyright". Is there any obstacle to my quoting the document because it has a copyright mark?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am glad to inform the hon. Gentleman that there is no bar — he is quite free to quote the document if he so wishes. However, I hope that he will not read very long extracts from it, in the interests of time.

7.22 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): It is the Chairman of Ways and Means who has placed this motion upon the Order Paper. I think that that, of itself, demonstrates that what we are dealing with tonight is not a debate on the merits of the Bill, but simply one on parliamentary procedure. Essentially, the motion states:

"the Promoters . . . shall have leave to suspend proceedings . . . in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament."

There is nothing unusual about that. Indeed, only yesterday no fewer than four major private Bills were brought before the House for carry-over motions—the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 2) Bill (Lords), the River Humber (Burcom Outfall) Bill (Lords), the Mersey Docks and Harbour Bill (Lords) and the Port of Fosdyke Bill (Lords). The House assented without debate to the proposal that all those Bills should be carried over for further consideration in the next Session.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, while it is fairly common for carry-over motions to be approved by the House, it is exceptional for two carry-over motions to be sought? The interesting point is that 12 months ago the promoters came forward with a carry-over motion, and have now done so again. It is their intransigence that has necessitated two attempts to carry over the Bill. Can the hon. Gentleman give a precedent for that?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The House will form its own judgment on why there has been protracted consideration of the Bill.

Because this is a procedural matter, I shall confine myself to the procedures that we have followed so far. On 13 May 1985, just over 18 months ago, the Bill received an overwhelming majority on Second Reading. There were consecutive votes of 201 to 54 and 195 to 59. The House

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voted virtually four to one that the Bill should proceed. It then went to Committee where, rather surprisingly for a private Bill, it remained for five months. The Committee devoted 26 working days to the Bill, beating the previous record for a private Bill in Committee by two days. There have also been four debates on the Floor of the House. Therefore, we have spent 15 hours on the Floor of the House and 145 hours in Committee— making a total of 160 hours of parliamentary time—discussing the Bill.

The time has now come for the House to reach a decision. Unfortunately, and certainly through no fault of the promoters, hon. Members have been able to delay a final decision. Consequently, with time running out, there is no alternative but to move the motion so that the House shall have an opportunity to arrive at a decision on a matter to which it has already devoted this extraordinarily large amount of time. It would be to the discredit of the House if, after that Second Reading vote and all the hours spent on the Bill, the House was to be prevented from reaching a conclusion on the Bill.

I therefore support the motion on the Order Paper in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means.

7.27 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I rise to speak briefly against the carry-over motion. I think that the public, as well as hon. Members, will be bemused by what is happening with this Bill. They will wonder why so much money is being spent by the promoters to get it through. They will wonder why so many people are putting their prestige at risk and why so much effort is being made to push through the Bill. They will wonder why so many reputations are being put on the line.

The public will find it odd that Conservative Members have been telling their colleagues at what time there would be a closure motion. I thought that whether or not there could be a closure motion was a matter for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—but Conservative Members apparently have it all worked out. They are saying that there will be a closure motion. That appears to be a form of contempt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know that you would not be pushed around by anyone. Let us hope that there will be no closure motion.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths)—I bear him no ill-will; he is doing his best—has his facts back to front about the amount of time spent on the Bill. The one thing that is precious above all else in the House of Commons is time on the Floor of the House, and when a Bill has been debated for so long on the Floor of the House and cannot go through, it has had a fair wind, to use the term used by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds in a document that I saw today, and it should be dropped from the schedule.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds said that the Bill had been debated for 15 hours on the Floor of the House. That is more than enough time. The hon. Gentleman is helping my argument. I asked some researchers to find out how long the debate has taken, and they told me that it had been debated on the Floor of the House for 12 hours and 50 minutes. I ask the House to think back through all the private Bills that have gone through the House in the past 20 years and ask when the House was so generous with its time that it allowed debates on the Floor of the House for either my figure of 12 hours and 50 minutes or the staggering figure of 15 hours given by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds.

Even as I speak, I am running through those private Bills chronologically and alphabetically in my mind. I am pressing buttons and they are all coming up in front of me, and I think that I am right in saying that six private Members' Bills have been debated for an exceptionally long time on the Floor of the House. No. 6 on the list, in 1970-71, is the Mersey Docks and Harbour Act, which was debated for eight hours and 10 minutes. I was not here then but I am told that, by the time the Act went through, after such a long time, there was pain and tension on the faces of hon. Members. No. 5 on the list is the Birmingham City Council Act, which went through during the 1984-85 Session. I was here at that time, so I know that it was debated for eight hours and 20 minutes and that tempers got so frayed at that length of debate that I heard one hon. Member—it was not recorded in *Hansard,* presumably because it was unparliamentary — call another hon. Member a cad. That shows the difficulties into which we get when we debate these matters for so long.

No. 4 on the list is the Isle of Wight County Council Act, again going through the House over the 1970-71 Session, which was debated for eight hours and 59 minutes. By the time that had gone through the House, the whole House was asleep. It was rather as though the Foreign Secretary had spoken uninterrupted for that length of time. Third on the list was the West Midlands County Act, which is the precedent for which my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) was looking when he spoke about two carry-overs. The Bill was carried over from 1977-78 to 1978-79 and then to 1979-80. It shows the impartiality with which I approach these matters that I am prepared to show precedent against my side.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will my hon. Friend accept that neither of those carry-overs was opposed, and they were necessitated by a general election?

Mr. Sedgemore: I accept that. I am glad that my hon. Friend has hit the ball from our court and has left Conservative Members to answer the point.

That Bill was debated on the Floor of the House for nine hours and 15 minutes, and a kind of mental torpor was induced in hon. Members on both sides of the House. Then there was the Lloyd's Act, that famous Bill, conceived in scandal and with its scandalous result. Until this Bill, that was the leader. It was debated on the Floor for some 13 hours and four minutes and, even if my figure is right, that is bound to be exceeded by the time that this Bill goes through. Of all the Acts in the past 20 years, why has the House allowed the extraordinary lengthy debate on this Bill to continue?

The passage of the Bill reflects the falling of standards in public and private life which has been characterised too much by this Administration. I see the Bill, and the way in which it has been dealt with in the House, as a kind of soap opera rather like "EastEnders", where the standards of moral probity and integrity are set by "Dirty Den" and that gormless poor old sod who grows leeks that are inedible and is taking money out of the Christmas fund that belongs to the residents of Hackney, who are the victims of the Conservative Government.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East) *rose*——

Mr. Sedgemore: I do not wish to speak for too long, so I shall not give the hon. Gentleman the pleasure of interrupting me. He wants to get the Bill through, so I am sure he can contain his impatience. He has had part of the 23 days over which the Bill was dealt with in Committee and heroically—no praise is too high—fought by my hon. friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

Mr. Boyes: To which Tory Member was my Friend referring when he spoke of "Dirty Den"?

Mr. Sedgemore: I shall not go down that line, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I am sure that you would interrupt me. My hon. Friend tempts me, as he always does, and I always try to behave properly and stick to the rules.

Mr. Sayeed *rose*——

Mr. Sedgemore: I take the view that, if someone wants something in life, one should give it to him. Some people want to be Prime Minister, so one should let them be Prime Minister. The hon. Gentleman is desperate to intervene, so let him do so.

Mr. Sayeed: The hon. Gentleman gave us a ream of statistics as to how long Bills have taken. Has he noticed that the longer he has spent in the House, the longer private Bills have spent on the Floor of the House? Is there a connection?

Mr. Sedgemore: I am a statistician and I have done the cross-correlations; the correlation in these cases is that the longer a Bill is debated on the Floor of the House, the worse it is. If the hon. Gentleman does not like drawing graphs to work things out, he can do it with algebra and the differential calculus. If he does it that way, he will find that the correlations hold.

Can one conceive what our grandchildren will say about this Bill? It is 1 January 2000—a new century is about to begin. I do not have a granddaughter now, but given that I may have one then, what will she say to me about the passage of the Bill and this vote? She will ask me, "Where were you, granddaddy, when the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act went through the House?" I shall put her on my knee and say, "Little one, I was there at the start. On 28 October 1986, on a debate on the carry-over motion, I had the privilege of being allowed to address the House, but the days rolled by from May till September, the years passed, one parliamentary Session merged into the next, and then there was special legislation to carry it over from one election to another and by the time that the Act came on to the statute book I had retired from Parliament and worse than that, some of my most revered friends and colleagues, good people that they were, were dead."

I shall then turn to my wife, who will be my little granddaughter's grandmother and I will say, "Do you remember old Kenny Weetch, that slip of a bloke from Ipswich, who was much tougher than you think, and the man who fought to stop the Act? The great thing about Kenny Weetch was that he could smell fiduciary trouble and could sniff out financial irregularities."

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Is it not possible that the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) is sniffing out an electoral advantage?

Mr. Sedgemore: The one hon. Member I would absolve from that type of scurrilous attack—except, of course, Mr. Speaker and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—would be my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch). Nothing could be further from his mind when he goes to bed every night. His conscience is clear.

I wonder why I woke at five o'clock this morning and thought about whether we should vote for or against this motion. What worries me about this debate? When I breathe in the atmosphere, why, instead of feeling exhilarated, do I feel depressed, apart from the fact that I can hear my own voice? I think that part of the answer is contained in this letter from Mr. George Blackhall. I do not want to attack him but I am bound to say that this is not the type of letter that should be written by respectable people who try to gain consensus in the House. He referred to some of my hon. Friends—I take it he was not referring to me — as a "small coterie" of Labour Members. He is saying that he does not believe in the democratic process or in the right of hon. Members to say, "We have had enough time to debate the Bill. It now ought to be dropped because it has not secured the consensus of the House." I am sure that he wants the Bill to be passed because, presumably, there is money in it for him.

I do not warn Mr. Blackhall, because I do not like to threaten people—I am usually the one who is threatened—but I say to him that he should remember the usurers in Dante's "Inferno". They were taken into circle seven and made to stand on hot sands beneath burning rains. That sort of thing will happen to him if he continues to write this kind of letter to Members of Parliament.

It is said that the Bill will pass because it has the support of local Members of Parliament and the present and, I believe, past chairmen of the Conservative party and the Committee. I do not intend to attack any chairman of the Conservative party because they could become an endangered species, rather like the birds that will be affected in this part of Suffolk.

There are problems. One of the local people concerned happens to have been — I accept that it is pure coincidence — the past chairman of the Conservative party. Part of his function—this is perfectly all right—is to get money for the Conservative party. As the Bill has been considered, European Ferries Ltd. has been pouring money into the Conservative party as though there will be no tomorrow. That is one reason why some of us are beginning to think that we will vote against the Bill, if indeed there is a vote and we get to the vote tonight.

I ask hon. Members to think about it. Is it not odd that not many private Member's Bills are before Parliament at the moment? Not many private companies give such an amount of money to the Conservative party. Therefore, one is tempted to ask why. Let us not condemn the chairman of the Conservative party. In addition to trying to get the Bill through Parliament with this free enterprise Whip with three lines under it—it is a wretched job; we all know that—and in addition to getting money out of European Ferries for the Conservative party, one has to gag the British Broadcasting Corporation, rig the courts and do all kinds of things that one would not otherwise wish to do.

When the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds introduced the Bill, he said that he thought that it would be given a fair wind as it went through Parliament. Of course, the money would help to give it a fair wind, but, in addition to that, it was said that the parish, district and county councillors and local Members of Parliament were all Conservative loyalists and would ensure that the Bill was pushed through. It was said of previous developments,

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such as the Trinity terminal, that the massed ranks of the Conservative party had joined forces and tried to secure the development. A gale is raging against the Bill in the heartland of Conservative Britain. That is why we should not push it through tonight. Surely we have had enough of this.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman's political meteorology is accurate. Which responsible bodies in East Anglia or Suffolk oppose the Bill on any economic grounds?

Mr. Sedgemore: I am coming to that point. I am glad the hon. Gentleman asked me that question. I am sure that he wishes to assist me.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Which bodies?

Mr. Sedgemore: The hon. Gentleman must be patient. He must not act as though he is Robin Day, that type of out-of-work barrister. I am a real barrister. The out-of-work barrister says to the witness, "Answer the question, answer the question, answer the question." The real barrister is far more subtle about it. He gently draws out the answers. That is why such people win cases. If, God forbid, the hon. Gentleman became a barrister, I would not call on him to defend me.

A number of environmentalists, politicians and people concerned with navigational aids have joined forces to oppose the Bill. There has been a type of holy trinity; God the father, God the son and God the Holy Ghost—the Labour party, the East Coast yacht club and the Trinity preservation society.

I do not wish to examine the merits of the Bill, because to do so would be out of order. It is interesting that, in order to discuss the Bill, I have had to talk to people who are interested in yachting. By and large, yachting is as far from my perspective as possible, although my son likes it. I went to the Royal Thames yacht club. Imagine my surprise when I found that it is in Knightsbridge. There is no water there. I thought that a ship needed water to keep afloat. I went through the door, and, after I said who I was, a flunkey said to me, "Quarterdeck, Sir?" I said, "Is that up or down?" I still do not know.

In order to debate the Bill, I talked to people, some of whom were disturbed by it, whatever the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds may say. I talked to people from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the royal college of ornithology, or whatever it is. Where did we talk? I stayed at Posty farm near Maenclochog in the Preseley mountains. At the top of the Preseley mountains birds were hovering and swooping. We asked ourselves whether they were kestrels or peregrine falcons. My son had his zoom lens camera. The zoom lens camera was invented by a Communist professor, whose son is a friend of mine. That is slightly off the track so I will return to the subject. We are waiting to see the photographic prints to determine what these birds were. I do not suppose there are any kestrels or peregrine falcons in this area, but many other birds will be at risk, and many people from the royal society will be worried about that. *[Interruption.]* My PPS, the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), has handed me a paper. The chairman of the Tribune group is acting as my PPS. That is the type of power that I like to see.

Surely we cannot proceed with this carry-over motion when the status of the parent company is not known. As I understand it, the parent company of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company is European Ferries Ltd. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds should comment on this because circumstances have changed vastly. We have discovered that P and O has bought a large slice of European Ferries. Ministers have also discovered it because they have referred that purchase to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under section 64 of the Fair Trading Act 1973. I am sure that the Minister will correct me if I am wrong.

Mr. Weetch: P and O has purchased 20·8 per cent. of the shares of European Ferries. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is currently conducting an inquiry into whether the shareholding should stand. The Department of Transport, which should be represented in this debate, has given written evidence and observations on whether the shareholding should stand. Whether or not it does will make a critical difference to the Bill. Would my hon. Friend welcome an intervention from the Under-Secretary of State for Transport so that hon. Members can learn the Government's attitude to the P and O acquisition of 20·8 per cent. of the shares of European Ferries?

Mr. Sedgemore: As ever, my hon. Friend goes to the heart of the matter, asking the most penetrating and perceptive questions. It almost hurts me, on behalf of the Government, to have to listen to them because they are so powerful and poignant in their effect. The problem is that the inquiry will take some time to complete, so we need the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come before the House. It is a fair bet that if the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry allows P and O to maintain its 20·8 per cent. interest, there is a real possibility that P and O will reconsider the whole scheme and may throw it out. It seems ludicrous that at this time, during the inquiry, hon. Members should say that we should carry over this tiresome debate to the next Session.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will my hon. Friend consider why European Ferries is encouraging P and O in its takeover? I understand that European Ferries is in some difficulty at Felixstowe docks because it spent a great deal of money expanding the Trinity quay on the basis that it would attract considerable extra trade. European Ferries put such predictions to the House, but it has not got the extra trade. Considerable capital costs are tied up in the Trinity quay and I understand that the company wrote to many of its employees more or less saying that, because of the problems of the capital tied up in the existing quays, there would not be a wage increase this year. It seems absolutely crazy to want to extend the quays when it looks as if the company will not be able to attract sufficient trade, thus putting it into an even worse financial position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman said a moment ago that he would not discuss the merits of the Bill because he realised that that would be out of order. That, of course, is perfectly correct. Incidental references to the merits of the Bill are, of course, necessary in a debate on a carry-over motion. However, I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that we are dealing with a carry-over motion and that the debate must be addressed to that.

Mr. Weetch: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Having followed the proceedings on the Bill carefully and

having read recently the debate on the carry-over motion last year, I know that the consensus was that matters in the carry-over motion could not be confined merely to the linkage of procedures, if I can put it like that, but could also focus on new material introduced into the debate. Does that still stand?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What I said was that it would not be in order to go into great detail about the merits of the Bill. Clearly, it is not possible to argue for or against a carry-over motion without some reference to the Bill. I am simply saying to the hon. Gentleman that detailed references to the Bill would not be in order on a carry-over motion.

Mr. Sedgemore: I accept what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The point that my hon. Friends and I are trying to get over is a large point. It is that the Bill may not have the same promoters. The financial control of those who are putting forward the Bill may be different by the time we come back. A powerful argument, in addition to the others I have used, is that the financial control of the promoters may be completely different in a few months. Conservative Members must combat that point. I do not have the expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) in financial matters, so I am not clear about the status or the financial solvency, or otherwise, of the existing promoters without P and O's stake.

I was astonished to read the submission of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It is a wonderful submission, which is all about economics. It gives some backing to the points which my hon. Friend made.

A fair number of local people do not want the Bill to be carried over. The House has an obligation to consult and advise. Hon. Members have an obligation to come here and warn other hon. Members of what local people are saying. The problem with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is that he represents a certain high-powered establishment sectional interest, the moneyed interest, but not the other groups who are complaining about the Bill. He asked me, and I have already told him, the names of some of the people who are opposed to the Bill, the yacht club—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Boyes: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) asked a question, but he is not listening to the answer.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am listening with one ear.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds for saying that he is listening with one ear. I do not intend to attack him tonight because, as always, I am exercising rigid control.

The hon. Gentleman asked me who was against the Bill. I was replying that the Labour party, the yacht club and the Trinity Preservation Society are opposed to the Bill. My parliamentary private secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington, has given me a list which includes the Ipswich shop stewards, Ipswich borough council, Friends of the Earth, the Suffolk ornithologists and one other, which I cannot read. Most of those groups are environmentalists.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds could have said, "Look, the real reason we want this Bill to be carried over is that there will be a lot of jobs in this for a particular area. So we ought to carry it over and get it out of the way." My hon. Friends and I must combat that argument, and I intend to do so briefly. It is easy to put jobs in one area and take them away from another. It is easy to divide and rule. However, changes in economic circumstances make this carry-over motion much less desirable than it would otherwise have been. The Government have announced a profound economic change which will affect the course of this debate. They have said that monotheistic monetarism, based on the one god of M3, is now dead, but they are beginning to discover that pantheistic monetarism, which is based on the wisdom of a variety of gods —MO, M1, M2, M3 PSO 1, PSO2, broad money and narrow money—is also dying. The only way to get jobs for Felixstowe and the surrounding areas which will survive and allow the economy to expand is to stimulate demand and take steps about financial control and trade.

I shall not continue that debate, as it is taking me away from my main argument. However, in the light of the nature of previous debates, the moneyed interests which are pushing the Bill helter-skelter through the House, the environmental, political and navigational interests, and the overriding economic interests, there is a powerful case —I put it no higher—for some of us to think about voting against the carry-over motion tonight.

7.59 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) along the path of speculation as to whether the House of Sedgemore will survive into the next century. Nor do I intend to help him to advertise his moonlighting activities, about which I was surprised to hear, except to say that if he can advance a bad case as well as he has done tonight he should earn some handsome fees, and I wish him many happy briefs in the future.

The hon. Gentleman touched on some other private Bills which have had a lengthy consideration. In particular, he referred to the Lloyd's Bill. I, as the Member who took the Lloyd's Bill through the House, was annoyed to discover that what I thought was a record length of scrutiny was likely to be defeated by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), but I could not wish to be beaten by a more splendid man.

However, there is one big difference. The Lloyd's Bill, that excellent piece of legislation which is now being put into effect, went through the House thanks, to some extent, to the strong support that I had from the Labour party, and, indeed, from the Labour Front Bench, for which I am grateful. Any opposition and attempts to divide the House came from the Conservative Benches. I do not recall that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch expressed any opposition to that piece of legislation.

Mr. Sedgemore: I was not here.

Sir Anthony Grant: If the hon. Gentleman was not here, bad luck. If he had been here, he might have learnt a lot more about the Lloyd's insurance market and would not have made some of the errors that he has made subsequently.

The fact of the matter is that the Bill has had a record length of scrutiny by the House.

I support the carry-over motion because of a constituency interest. It is well known in the House that Trinity college, Cambridge, owns the land. I must explain

[Sir Anthony Grant]

that Trinity college is within the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James), who is, unfortunately, unable to be here tonight because he is abroad. However, I think he would agree that he has played an active and responsible part in the promotion of the legislation on behalf of his constituent, Trinity college.

I have an interest because a number of members of the college live in my constituency. First, as I have said previously, when the Bill was considered by Trinity college it was supported by 48 votes to nil. It is no good suggesting that Trinity college is in some strange way an adjunct of the Conservative party—far from it. Some very different views have been expressed at Trinity, but by 48 votes to nil it decided that this was a right and proper measure and in the interests of the college and the area.

The money which will be derived from the venture will not go into the pockets of the dons. It will be used entirely to help assist poorer colleges in Cambridge, thus helping the education process and, in particular, improving higher education. Indeed, it will help foreign students. We hear a great deal from Labour Members about the lamentable nature of higher education and how more money must be pumped into it. Here is an example of the way in which, through free enterprise and passing the Bill, money will come into Cambridge university and help the cause of higher education. That is one reason, if not the only one, why I hope that if there is a Division some thoughtful Labour Members will give the Bill a fair wind.

In all the scrutiny and debate and the speech that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, one group has not been referred to, and that is the people who work at the dock. They have a right to be heard in the same way as the RSPB, and so on. They know that 5,000 jobs are involved. They also know that if the scheme goes through there will probably be 3,000 more jobs in an area where jobs are needed. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds will confirm that.

Indeed, the work force is remarkable. I have just been informed that it has broken a record. Felixstowe has just established a world record for the rapid discharge of containers by unloading 60 in an hour with the aid of the fine new British container cranes on the recently opened Trinity terminal. I have a cutting from the *Felixstowe Mercury* of 17 October 1986 which shows a happy group of workers at the Trinity container terminal who are celebrating as the terminal manager distributes champagne to crane driver Mick Potter and the rest of the team to mark their achievement in handling 60 boxes an hour on the new terminal. They look a tough and formidable lot.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: If the workers are doing so well on the existing quay and have increased productivity so much, is the hon. Gentleman sure that they need a further quay? Cannot they get the capacity through without it? The company has recently written to employees pointing out that it cannot attract sufficient trade to maintain that level of output.

Sir Anthony Grant: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman goes down to the docks and says just that to this group of men, who I was just saying are a tough-looking lot, as they stand drinking their champagne. If he made that sort of speech to them he might find himself ending up in the dock. I am sure that, being honourable men, they would fish him out again, but they might think that he needed a good wetting.

There has been long opposition to the Bill, some of it understandable. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), although misguided, has fought a valiant campaign in the best traditions of a constituency Member. Other opposition I can only describe as amusing but basically mischievous. We have had enough of it. The motion should be passed in the interests, not just of Trinity college, East Anglia and Felixstowe, but of the nation.

8.7 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): It may be for the convenience of the House if I intervene briefly. I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) in his justification for the carry-over of the Bill. I agree with what he says about more resources for further education and foreign students. I only hope that he can persuade the Government of the virtue of that idea. We cannot fund it through the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company. It needs a development in a different direction.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about jobs and employment. Labour Members are concerned about jobs, employment and unemployment as we represent constituencies with high unemployment and are having to deal with the problem on a daily basis.

When we discussed the principle of the Bill we dealt with ports policy in a national context. If Felixstowe is developed in the way sought by the Bill, the hon. Gentleman must recognise that that would have a profound effect upon the ports of Southampton and Tilbury. There could be substantial redundancies and unemployment in those ports as a consequence of such development. We cannot speak about that this evening, but we have had those arguments before.

I recall standing at the Dispatch Box, probably a year ago to the day, although I may be a couple of days out, when I intimated to the Under-Secretary that both he and I had the unfortunate responsibility of drawing the short straw. It always seems to happen when the schools have broken up for half term and my wife makes her annual visit to London. This evening, I have to listen yet again to a debate on a carry-over motion on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. The Bill has had a longer run in the west end than "The Mousetrap". It certainly feels like that.

I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who gave the House a historical account of the precedents for carrying over private Bills. We have been debating this Bill for a long time, and here we are once again, in the overlap session before the Queen's Speech, being asked to reconsider the Bill and to allow it further time. There are reasons why we should not do that. I shall allow my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), to expound the important reasons why the House should not allow the procedure to continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich, on a point of order, asked whether it was permissible to quote from a document which was marked "Copyright". I do not know why it has been marked "Copyright" as it seems to be a perfectly normal memorandum from the company to the work force. It states:

"The shortfall in income has been further aggravated by the fact that worldwide too many ships are chasing too few

containers thus lowering freight rates and seriously and adversely effecting the financial health of all of our customers who cannot pay the rates we need and from the intense and sometimes unfair competition from Continental ports."

It is true that there is unfair competition from continental ports. There always has been. The Opposition have tried to draw attention to the problem. If the problem is unchanged and even getting worse, should we allow the company to expand as it wishes, given the current economic climate?

The local Ipswich evening paper states:

"P and O chairman Sir Jeffrey Sterling already has a seat on the E.F. board thanks to a 20·8 per cent. slice in the group. Shipping experts believe European Ferries is becoming ripe for the taking because of the weak position of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, which runs Felixstowe port."

That did not happen last year. We were unaware of the P and O company's interest in the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company. That interest has come to light relatively recently. If a major company such as P and O wishes to take over or buy in a large proportion of the shares of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, it may take an entirely different view—given the economic climate and the fact that there will be, in principle at least, a fixed link across the channel — based entirely on economic reasons, as to whether this development should go ahead. If that is the case, it is important that Parliament should recognise that if the company is taken over it may not, as a point of principle, require the development to go ahead.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: That is not true.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman says that that is not true. I acknowledge his interest in the matter, but I am not convinced by his statement that that is not true because throughout the entire episode the sands have shifted daily. That is why, a year later, the promoters are asking for more time on the Bill. If my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will deploy those arguments to suggest that there has been a radical change in the past 12 months and that the House should recognise that change if it wishes to give the Bill more time.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to get the facts right? I know that he would wish to be fair. The evidence is that Felixstowe has shown a 20 per cent. increase in containers this year. There has been an increase of 38 per cent. in its freightliner business this year. The management of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company — the promoters of the Bill — says that the letter from which the hon. Gentleman quoted was addressed privately to its employees. The management goes on to make it clear that it confidently stands by its predictions and that the letter in no way bears the interpretation placed upon it by the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch).

Mr. Stott: I can only quote to the hon. Gentleman the contents of the memorandum dated 27 August 1986. It was signed by Mr. Blackhall, the managing director, and stated:

"The shortfall in income has been further aggravated by the fact that worldwide too many ships are chasing too few containers".

Felixstowe is a very good port, as I have always acknowledged, and does a very good job. We object to its expansion because it would not be in the national interest and it would affect other existing ports because of the total volume of cargo handled in the United Kingdom.

I end by referring to the letter that was mentioned at the beginning of the debate on a point of order, again from the managing director, Mr. Blackhall. It states:

"As I am sure you are only too well aware the progress of the above Bill"—

the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill—

"has to date been very slow, due largely to the delaying tactics of a small coterie of Labour Members."

We have advanced our arguments on the principle of not accepting this private Bill. We have done that in the best spirit and intentions of the House. Our comments are on the record for all to see. I say to the management of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company that we were elected and it was not. We have a democratic right to do what we are doing. If the managing director of that company wishes to address remarks to the House, I suggest that he stands for Parliament and does exactly that. Those of us who were elected to the House will continue to do our duty despite that company.

8.18 pm

Sir Paul Hawkins (Norfolk, South-West): I shall comment briefly on the carry-over of this Bill. My interest in the matter was aroused mainly because it was my constituent, Gordon Parker, who started Felixstowe docks. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) say that Felixstowe docks has been one of the outstanding commercial successes in Britain. But I fear that jealousies have been aroused in neighbouring towns such as Ipswich. I am sad that the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), who is a very good Member of Parliament, supports those jealousies. I must urge the speedy carry-over and completion of the Bill because it affects all of East Anglia, where I was born and part of which I have represented for the past 20 years.

The whole region benefits tremendously from the Felixstowe docks. The amount of traffic there has increased and businesses have grown up round the docks. Opposition Members have made some good jokes about this affair, but it is a serious matter for thousands of people who work not only in the docks but in ancillary businesses, such as transport. Other businesses have also sprung up as a result of our entry into Europe. Traffic that used to travel north-south now travels west-east because of Felixstowe's proximity to the continent, thus generating much more employment along with, thank goodness, a necessity to bypass many of the market towns in my area.

Consequently, I support carrying over the Bill. Indeed, it is a tragedy that it will have to be carried over. Opposition to it has been a disaster for the region. No sane man, no matter of what political hue, could want the region to be damaged as severely as it will be if the Bill is not carried over or given a fair wind.

8.21 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) challenged me to talk to dockers. But I recently went to Southampton to talk to dockers who are extremely concerned about the Bill continuing. They legitimately say that in the past two years they have tremendously improved productivity at the port of Southampton. The port is now handling a substantially increased number of

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containers. Moreover, capacity at Southampton could be dramatically increased within the existing area of hardstanding.

Southampton's dockers also point upriver to several miles of what used to be attractive mud flats that supported a substantial population of waders. The flats were reclaimed on the ground, originally, that Southampton docks would be extended. There is nothing that we can do, and that area is now lost as a natural habitat for birds. But if there is an absolute necessity for more container berths, a strong argument could be made for developing those flats, where the natural environment has already been lost.

Hon. Members must consider whether the House should continue with what is, in many ways, an archaic procedure. I refer to the private Bill procedure. At the beginning of the debate, we argued about the number of hours that had been spent on the Bill. But Opposition Members can cite precedents going back to 1945 showing that there have never been two opposed carry-over motions on such a Bill. During the last century, Parliament spent far more time on private business than it does now. In some sessions more than 50 per cent. of parliamentary time was devoted to private Bills. A tremendous amount of work was done on Bills promoting the railways and canals. For example, in, I think, the 1890s, the Manchester Ship Canal Company had to make three attempts at getting the ship canal legislation through.

People came to believe that the private Bill procedure was unsatisfactory. Alternative procedures such as public inquiries were developed, which I mentioned last year when we debated the carry-over motion. It is always difficult to persuade people that they have had a fair hearing when they do not want something to be done to their environment. Many people are unhappy if they lose their case at a public inquiry. But the majority of people would feel that a public inquiry was more likely to give them a fair hearing than the private Bill procedure would.

Members of Parliament do not have time to scrutinise all the planning arguments involved. Those who have seen the proceedings in the Channel Tunnel Bill will have tremendous sympathy for the few Members of Parliament sitting on that Committee. They will also feel that ultimately none of the objectors will think that they have had a fair hearing or that their objections were considered. Inevitably, hon. Members have other duties and cannot devote half a year or more to the arguments adduced.

The Channel Tunnel Bill gives us an extreme example, but the Felixstowe Bill well illustrates the problems facing objectors. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the ramblers and some other interest groups managed to find people to put in objections, but if they had not done so, it would have been difficult for local objections to be heard by the Committee.

The promoters could engage barristers to put their case, but the opposition often had to use people who were not legally qualified. Consequently, the odds were stacked against them. There was little opportunity for the ordinary individual to put his case to the Committee. However, as long as someone had a clear interest in an issue, the public inquiry inspector would normally let him put forward his case or his objections. Therefore, I believe that the public inquiry procedure is far more satisfactory.

Last time we debated the carry-over motion it was said that the promoters could not proceed via a planning application or planning procedures, and that because the original development had been covered by a Bill, there would have to be another Bill. But it would have been easy for the promoters to go for a local public inquiry into the planning issues and, having gained permission, they could have gone for a Bill to implement that public inquiry's decision. Instead, the Bill tries to eliminate any opportunity of a public inquiry.

The House should consider the procedures surrounding private Bills. As a result of the fuss made about a quorum, a committee of inquiry was set up to look into the question of private Bills. I believe that the House should consider the issues carefully. Perhaps it should make it clear to promoters that they will not get an easy ride unless they have gone for a public inquiry where local and national issues can be tested.

The sad thing is that, although we have debated the issue for 15 hours or more, the idea of a national ports policy has not been developed. We have not managed to persuade a Minister to say whether the Government believe that there is a surplus port capacity or an overwhelming deficit. No one has been able to say what the impact of the Channel tunnel will be on the demand for container berths in this country. Until we have that information, it will be impossible for the House or anybody else to judge whether there is a strong case for such a development. Against that, we must weigh the question of protecting the natural environment.

It has been strongly argued that the estuary is one of the few large estuaries in Britain that has not been substantially encroached upon. Encroachments have been made onto similar marshes at Southampton and Tilbury. Until the land that has already been lost has been fully developed, there is no substantial case for continuing at Felixstowe.

In spite of all the hours, the issues have not been resolved. A planning inquiry would have dealt with the issues more effectively. The Government should make a statement to the House on national ports policy. They should state whether they believe that there is surplus capacity, whether it is right to move trade from one port to another and whether they genuinely believe that extra trade could be created at Felixstowe, since no one else believes that.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West suggested that by selling off the land and developing it as a dock, money could be raised for higher education. I have no doubt that we could sell off many parts of our national heritage. Much of our coastline and many ancient monuments could be sold, but I am sure that the majority involved in higher education do not want us to sell our national assets to provide an acceptable level of higher education. I am sure that those involved believe that we should not finance higher education by selling the environment to make a quick profit.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: How does the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) square that argument with the fact that Trinity college, Cambridge, which certainly qualifies as being part of our higher education system, is the owner of much of the land provided for the expansion? Its fellows unanimously concluded that on all

grounds—to help Trinity with its higher education, to help the environment and to help the future of East Anglia —they would support the Bill.

Mr. Bennett: I am aware of the greed of individuals. I can understand how some may argue that selling off the environment is worth while to help a particular cause such as higher education. However, it is a sad fact that most of our natural assets have disappeared because someone has wanted to raise money. Almost all the slag heaps and slate quarry tips were created in the name of raising money either for an individual or for a good cause. As a result, we have lost some of our natural environment.

I am disappointed that the fellows of Trinity college do not have more interest in our environment, but I can understand why they believe that raising money for the college is more important than protecting the natural environment.

The House should not, at this stage, agree to a carry-over motion. The House should decide that the Bill has had sufficient time. It should suggest to the promoters that they take the Bill away and then make up their minds whether the company will continue as a company or whether it should be taken over by P and O. I understand that P and O has considerable interests in other ports and if it takes over it might decide not to make any proposals.

Having sorted out its own financial situation, if the new company wants to go ahead, it should make a planning application so that an inquiry can take place to test the national interest in connection with ports policy against the protection of the environment. An inquiry could test local implications for communications, the impact upon East Anglian roads and the impact on rail traffic through Ipswich. If the inspector then recommends to the Minister that the proposals are acceptable, have decided upon local requirements, conservation and parks, the company can come back to the House and say that it has been through all the consultation. In those circumstances, the House would give an easy passage to a new Bill.

Until the promoters are able to convince a planning inquiry and convince the objectors that they have had a fair hearing, some hon. Members believe it unfair to allow the Bill to proceed and will not only oppose the motion tonight but will continue to oppose the measure through its remaining stages.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) seems to think that it is important to get the Bill through. We have heard about how concerned the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West is to get the Bill through. The last time that we debated the Bill they were so busy talking about it among themselves that they did not move the right amendments at the appropriate time. That was unfortunate. I question whether the House should have to find extra injury time. They thought it very important to press the measure, but they did not supervise the way in which hon. Members were encouraged to vote.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): Is there not something rather creditable that during proceedings on a Private Member's Bill, on a private occasion, the Whips were not nudging hon. Members and asking them to say something or other? That shows that amateurism is alive and happy and living at Westminster.

Mr. Bennett: This is not a Private Member's Bill but a private Bill. Surely it was incumbent upon the promoters to ensure that the hon. Member in charge of the Bill knew what was happening. The hon. Member was advised by a respected hon. Member who used to be a Clerk in the House, so it was unfortunate that he got the procedure wrong.

How serious are the promoters? The evidence is that they want a blank cheque from the House so that they can develop the site—possibly. There is no certainty that the company will exist or that the trade will exist to make an economic and viable port.

I hope that the House will reject the motion so that the promoters have to start again.

8.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): I intervene only briefly because the motion is strictly procedural. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) has had his half-term arrangements spoilt. I sympathise with him, because I have a similar problem.

The hon. Member for Wigan and others have said that the Bill has taken up a great amount of time. That is true. The Bill is controversial, and hon. Members have understandably used the parliamentary procedures to extend the debates.

The Government believe that the Bill is sufficiently important for the House to have a further opportunity to consider the arguments for and against it on the basis of the Select Committee's recommendations, which incorporate various amendments and safeguards. It would be unfortunate not to agree to the motion in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means. I urge the House to agree to the motion and allow the Bill to be carried over.

8.38 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The promoters want the Bill, and although it is a private Bill the Government are involved in it. The Bill is wide in its implications and not what we usually expect from a private Bill. It is limited in scope, but it has serious implications beyond the port of Felixstowe to ports in other regions.

Much has been said about Felixstowe's record and in that sense I support the Felixstowe dock workers. I do not want to see them deprived of their jobs. Since 1983, however, there has been a 24 per cent. reduction in the labour force of registered dock workers at certain ports in the northern region and the south-west, and a 30 per cent. reduction at Southampton and London.

The Bill will achieve what the Government have wanted to do since they came to power in 1979. The Government's plan embraces the National Dock Labour Board and the dock labour scheme and is not confined to Felixstowe. The Government know that if the non-scheme ports are extended, the number of workers employed at scheme ports will eventually decline and the scheme will wither on the vine.

The opportunities that the Government had in the early 1980s to attack the scheme were deferred. They did not want a confrontation with registered dock workers and the union representing them, so they sought a more subtle approach. First, they removed the limited but important planning regulations that governed how, when and whether ports could be developed. Financial constraints had been placed on ports and their development, and these were removed by the Tory Government as a deliberate act

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of policy to ensure that the development of non-scheme ports would eventually lead to the abolition of the dock labour scheme and registered dock workers.

I worked on the Mersey for 28 years, and I am concerned that the port authorities have not carried out a feasibility study into the consequences of the proposed construction on the natural meandering of the river and the effect on other ports. I have seen nothing so far that suggests that there has been a suitable feasibility study. I worked with a scientific and industrial research organisation on a major development in the port of Liverpool that took the best part of two years to complete. We carried out tidal and current observations and water sampling for salinity and suspended solids. Various new technological methods were used to try to ascertain what effects the construction would have. It is almost certain, however, that there is no way of predicting with certainty the tidal consequences once a construction of the sort that is proposed has been completed. No hydrographical surveyor, for example, would give any undertaking of what would happen to the meandering of a river once such a construction took place.

Merseyside ports other than Liverpool were adversely affected following the completion of the Liverpool development. For example, the Garston docks were cut off entirely as a tidal port for a while. A section of the river miles away from the construction began to silt up, creating major dredging problems. This can have an effect on a port's viability because of conservancy costs.

We should know why the Government have persisted in pressing this private Bill through the House. If the Bill had received a fair wind, it would not have taken such a long time to complete its passage through the House. Those of my hon. Friends who have opposed it have advanced serious reasons for so doing. They are concerned, as I am, about the consequences of the Bill's enactment for Ipswich and ports in other regions, including the north-west and the south-west. I have referred already to job losses in other areas, and if the Bill is enacted and the scheme goes ahead, other ports will suffer further erosion. That is inevitable, because demand in finite. There is no evidence that the Felixstowe port will attract new business, and the proposed development, if it takes place, will be to the detriment of other ports.

This measure should never have come before the House as a private Bill. The implications are far too serious and far-reaching for it to come before us in such a form. Those of us who represent port constituencies have a right to draw attention to the serious environmental consequences of the Bill's enactment. The balance between the north and the south must be restored and nothing should be done to increase the division that exists between the northern regions and the south of England. I am mindful also of the effect that the proposed development at Felixstowe would have on London and Southampton.

When the Chairman of Ways and Means was questioned by myself and others on this issue, he showed some concern about the way in which private Bills proceed in the House. It appears to me and many of my hon. Friends that the Bill is one of the worst examples of the way in which such measures are dealt with in this place. I hope that cognisance will be taken of that by yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Chairman of Ways and Means, so that no private Bills come before the House in future——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Loyden: —that have such serious implications and disguised political intentions, which in this instance are intended to destroy the dock labour scheme. It was established in 1947 by the late Ernie Bevin to remove the inhumanities that had been suffered by dock workers. Ernie Bevin was mindful of the impoverishment and sweated labour that existed in our ports. It seems that the Government want the old system to prevail once more, but perhaps in a different form. The motion should be opposed for the reasons that I have advanced.

8.47 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) has deplored the job losses that have occurred at some scheme ports. I am sure that everyone recognises that the only reason for these losses is the failure of the scheme ports to compete. I am glad to say that that is a failure of which Felixtowe has never been guilty. Even those who oppose the Bill, or the motion, have never suggested that the port has failed to compete domestically or internationally.

The hon. Member for Garston is a regular contributor to our Felixstowe debates, and some other regular contributors have spoken this evening, including the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Wigan (Mr. Stott). I am sorry that the hon. Member for Wigan was unable to remain at home with his wife during the half-term holiday because of the need for him to be in the Chamber this evening. Having heard his remarks, many might have concluded that it would have been better for his wife and the House if the hon. Gentleman had remained at home.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) who has been fighting for the Bill in various ways for 18 months. His work deserves a warm tribute from all my hon. Friends and all who are interested in the prosperity of East Anglia.

We should issue a welcome to some newcomers to the Felixstowe debate. At the beginning of this evening's debate we had a contribution from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore).

Mr. Sedgemore: I could not get in the previous debate on the Bill.

Mr. Yeo: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman should say that. The hon. Gentleman made no contribution to the previous debate and it appears that he did not stay for the Division, despite his great interest in the matter. He wanted to contribute to the debate but he could not stay for the vote. The same was true on Second Reading. He made no contribution to that debate, nor did he stay for the vote. He made some allegations about the closure motion, but it was he who asked my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds about a closure motion. No doubt the hon. Gentleman was very keen to get away, because had he stayed too long he might have been forced to vote for the first time. That reveals the hon. Gentleman's positition on this matter. All we can say is that his interest in Felixstowe seems to be of rather recent origin.

The public may conclude that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch is here this evening solely for the purpose of making trouble, but not out of concern for parliamentary procedure or anything to do with Felixstowe or the Bill. He managed to make a few irrelevant and cheap jibes about monetarism, but then threw his full weight against the carry-over motion and, by implication, agains jobs in Felixstowe. That makes his position on employment clear.

Earlier, we had the presence of another newcomer, the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). I am sorry that he has not stayed. I was hoping that we might have had a contribution. If we had, that, I believe, would have been the first contribution from any member of either the Liberal party or the Social Democratic party. Like the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, the hon. Member for Isle of Wight did not vote either on the carry-over motion in July or on Second Reading. But I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the hon. Gentleman was at least present for part of this debate, as hitherto the alliance has been conspicuous by its absence. What else can we expect from the alliance, which is always so ready to proclaim its concern about unemployment and lack of infrastructure spending, yet which, when it must stand up and be counted, quietly melts away into the night? It is then left to my hon. Friends to press ahead with specific and practical proposals.

The voters seem to have rumbled this habit of the alliance. I gather that today's opinion polls show a substantial reduction in alliance support. I believe that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight has spotted that trend, because he has announced that he will not contest his seat——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should relate his remarks to the carry-over motion.

Mr. Yeo: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for reminding me of that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds made an eloquent speech this evening, as he has done on previous occasions. He briefly outlined the progress that has led to this stage. The history is one of consistent obstruction by the Labour party, consistent disinterest by the alliance and consistent support by Conservative Members for a Bill that will enhance employment prospects in Suffolk and elsewhere in East Anglia. It will bring prosperity to the region and strengthen our international trading links with Europe and elsewhere.

As has been pointed out by other hon. Members, Felixstowe is a great private enterprise success story. That fact has no doubt provoked the Labour Opposition and the disinterest of the alliance. Perhaps there is another reason — that an expanded and successful Felixstowe, which a couple of years ago showed its reluctance to join other dockers in politically motivated industrial action, might make it harder for the Opposition's friends to bring the country to its knees in support of a destructive and politically motivated strike.

I have referred to the support of Conservative Members for the Bill, but really impressive is the wide support that it has enjoyed from others. It is much more impressive than the pathetic list of sectional interests consisting of bodies concerned only with Ipswich that was referred to by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch. In contrast to that, every significant and reputable industry and commercial organisation in East Anglia has expressed support for the Bill. Several tiers of local government responsible for the Felixstowe area have, after some discussion, given their support as well.

Apart from the valuable contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge, South-West (Sir A. Grant), I am particularly impressed by the way in which the trade unions have given their support. I do not refer necessarily to the trade union headquarters in London or to the trade union leaders who are remote from the action at Felixstowe. I am referring to the local members of the Transport and General Workers Union who work at Felixstowe. They know quite a lot about the situation, and they know how the Bill will serve the interests of the local work force and local community. They have a more direct interest than anyone in the success of this measure.

I am sorry that so far we have not had a contribution from the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch). His contributions have enlivened these debates on previous occasions. I merely note a curious reluctance on his part to speak this evening. He seems to be leaving it later and later. I noted his absence from the Chamber for a considerable period. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is now in his place, and I look forward to his contribution. I shall ensure that there is plenty of time for it.

I do not wish to go into much detailed argument about the Bill. We have had plenty of opportunity to do that in the past. It was debated perfectly adequately on Second Reading, and it was in Committee for a long time. I congratulate the Felixstowe company on the considerable lengths to which it has gone to respond to local expressions of concern about the environment, the effect on navigation and so on. The real issue with which the Bill—and, by implication, the carry-over motion — deal is jobs. Anyone who fails to support the motion is seeking to block the creation of thousands of new jobs in and around Felixstowe. I have no doubt that the public will form their own conclusions about any hon. Member who decides to oppose the motion.

Labour Members have tried to raise the issue of the P and O shareholding in European Ferries. The relevance of that shareholding seems to be obscure in the extreme. Even if P and O decided to make an outright takeover bid for European Ferries, the Felixstowe dock company will still remain in the private sector. It will still be the subsidiary of a public limited company whose shareholders will still have the same interest in the successful and prosperous expansion of the dock. They will have precisely the same interests as the present shareholders in the parent company of European Ferries.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Does not my hon. Friend, with his great authority on these matters, also agree that it would be most unlikely that a company such as P and O would contemplate investing in the Felixstowe port unless it was confident of its future prosperity?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Indeed, it would be of additional comfort to know that a major company such as P and O, headed by such a shrewd investor as Sir Jeffrey Sterling, should be contemplating a takeover of the parent company. The fact that he has made a substantial investment is of great encouragement to us all.

As a veteran of the Second Reading and the previous carry-over motion debates, I very much hope that this is

[Mr. Yeo]

the last time on which I shall have to speak on the Bill until it returns to us for Third Reading. I urge the House to pass the motion.

8.58 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Unlike some hon. Members who have spoken tonight, I have been present during the long debates on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill—not because I want to delay its passage unduly but because I am profoundly concerned about its contents. I strongly object to the carry-over motion. I do not want to rub salt in the wounds of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), but I and some of my colleagues were amazed when we saw him talking busily with another hon. Member at the point when he should have called something in this Chamber. I am sure that he will not be in a similar position tonight. I notice that he is without company. I am sure that he is giving his complete concentration to tonight's debate.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am not quite sure what the hon. Lady is complaining about. Is she complaining that the amendment that she supported was carried? Is that what is upsetting her? I should have thought, since she voted for it, that she would want to see it in the Bill.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am saying that it is rather strange that the hon. Gentleman should have started his speech tonight by saying how long the Bill had taken when it need not have taken so long had he been fully awake on the last occasion we debated it.

I am profoundly concerned about the Bill's implications. On many occasions I have spoken of its environmental and employment implications and the fact that it will affect ports policy. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) spoke passionately about that. He knows better than any hon. Member in the Chamber tonight how much the Bill will affect docks and dockers. The areas that he represents are profoundly affected by the Government's policies.

The Government are giving the Bill a nod, a wink and a nudge, as they have done on many occasions since we first considered it. As my hon. Friend said earlier, so wittily and humourously, one of the reasons there has been such dedication by Government Members to ensuring the passage of the Bill, regardless of what other important business the House should be considering and instead of giving us extra time to consider the Bill in the next Session of Parliament—there are all sorts of interests at play in the consideration of the Bill and ensuring its passage—is that the company in question was one of the largest contributors to the Tory party. Last year, the managing director——

Mr. Yeo *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman has taken up enough of our time, and I shall not give way.

Obviously, there is great interest on the part of the Government because I understand that in 1985 the company did not make its normal contribution to the Tory party. It did not want to be seen as oiling the hands of those who were supposed to be sitting in judgment on the Bill.

Mr. Yeo *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd: I was a member of the Opposed Private Bill Committee. Four Members of Parliament sat in judgment on important considerations — ports policy, employment policy and environmental policy. Those matters are of great concern to everybody, not least those dockers in other parts of Britain who will be affected if the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill becomes law. As a member of that Committee, I felt concerned that we, as people making a judgment at the end of the evidence, were unable to call independent witnesses.

We were never able to find answers to these questions. What will happen when the fixed Channel link is in place? How will it affect container traffic in this country? What will that do to the port of Felixstowe? Will the extra container capacity be necessary when the Channel tunnel will have a greater impact on the carrying of containers in future? Every time the Minister was asked those questions he refused to answer. How could people sitting in judgment reach a proper conclusion at the end of the day that the Bill should be supported, when an essential part of the evidence was not before them? In no way could one — *[Interruption.]* There is so much noise in the Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I cannot hear myself think.

As a member of that Committee, I could no longer come to a proper conclusion without hearing the evidence. The evidence was denied us. It is still being denied us, and I cannot see how in all honesty the House can come to a proper and well-thought-out conclusion on the matter without knowing what effect the Channel fixed link will have on container traffic in the future. Not only that, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Garston said, we believe that the measure is a way of rolling back the dock labour scheme as we know it, giving the private ports that are not in the scheme an opportunity to encroach further into the area of ports such as Ipswich which at present are members of the scheme. As my hon. Friend said, there will be profound policy implications for the whole of ports policy.

Those are the issues that we have not been able to discuss properly in the Opposed Private Bill Committee. That is why, if I am glad of one thing, it is that the whole procedure will now be reviewed by the House so that in future, we hope, a private company with vast resources will not be enabled to get planning permission by the back door while the objectors who have so few resources in comparison cannot present a proper case. What has happened in Committee and during the debates on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill is an anachronism. In the 1980s, it is intolerable that we should make policy in that way because a private company has the money to get planning permission by the back door.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: I am concluding on that point. That is why I vigorously oppose——

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose*——

Hon. Members: Order.

Mrs. Clwyd: I was about to conclude. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I was tempted to carry on, given the fact that so many hon. Members are becoming agitated by what I am saying. However, I know that some of my hon. Friends also want to participate in the debate.

I vigorously oppose the carry-on motion because I believe that the matters raised by the Felixstowe Dock and

Railway Bill should properly have been the subject of a public planning inquiry, and not brought in by the back door through Parliament.

9.7 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) is well acquainted with the procedures of the House in regard to private Bills. I recall that she spent a considerable time—I say this with the greatest respect to her—seeking to make sure that she did not sit on that Committee.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman has not been listening.

Mr. Cash: Furthermore, on Second Reading, when I spoke, it was clear that the hon. Lady was doing as much as possible to make sure that she would not attend the proceedings in the earlier stages of the private Bill procedure. It strikes me that she is singularly ill-qualified in this instance to criticise the procedures upon which we are now engaged.

The hon. Lady's point, which was verging on a point of substance, was whether it would be desirable not to adopt the private Bill procedure in view of the fact that a Committee is due to be set up in the next Session to deal with the private Bill procedure. She wondered whether it would be appropriate for the procedure to be replaced by the so-called normal planning procedures. I have news for the hon. Lady, or at least I think I have. The normal planning procedures would be far more likely to lead to all the potential corruption in dealing with planning permission and the difficulties that we have had with local authorities in the past than would a distinguished Committee of the House.

Such a Committee is not composed only of Conservative Members, but, in fairness to petitioners for and against the Bill, includes Opposition Members such as the hon. Lady. It is bizarre for the hon. Lady to criticise a procedure which she first avoided and then, having participated in it, to criticise that procedure despite the fact that it follows ancient tradition and procedure hallowed by many years of usage and going back to the 18th century. It has enabled many major projects to go through by means of a fair and quasi-judicial system.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman obviously speaks from some ignorance. If he had followed the previous debates, he would know that one of the reasons why I left the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill Committee was that I was profoundly worried about the way in which it was proceeding. Mr. Speaker knows of my anxiety about that, because I wrote to him at various times asking to be released from the Committee. I made the point that I thought the Opposed Private Bill Committee procedure ought to be overhauled. That was the only way that we were able to get a three-hour debate on that subject. As a result of that, a Committee is reviewing the procedure. That should be applauded, not denigrated.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her remarks, because they reminded me of a similar and analagous procedure related to what was then the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill 1976. At that time the Labour party singularly failed to achieve its objective of ensuring that ship repairers were nationalised. The hon. Lady may have engaged in certain tactics on the Committee on which she served in order to improve and enhance the procedure. I take that to be the meaning of what she has said.

The hon. Lady is making her points against the background of a long and ancient tradition which, through impartial procedures, enables petitioners and promoters to have a fair hearing before an all-party Committee. All-party Committees of that kind, including Select Committees, deserve rather more respect than some hon. Members have given them in their speeches.

Hon. Members will know that I rarely filibuster on matters of this kind and I have no intention of doing so now. I wish to make substantive points. It is important to bear in mind that the privileges of the House and the importance, respect and integrity with which the House is credited depend to a great extent on the impartiality which is evident to anybody who has had an opportunity, as the hon. Lady has had, to participate in the private Bill procedure. I am sure that the hon. Lady will acknowledge that.

I know that the hon. Lady's remarks were in no way intended to be a reflection on the Committee on which she sat. If the hon. Lady wishes to dispute that, she can intervene immediately. She does not intervene and by implication is agreeing with me that that Committee was an excellent one. I shall now move to my next point, which is why there should be a carry-over motion despite the carry-on of the hon. Lady, and why it would be desirable for us to pass this motion to ensure that the Bill continues in the procedure on which it has already embarked.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my hon. Friend not being unfair to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd)? I think that he is, because it is clear from column 1014 of *Hansard* of 12 February 1986 that she was led down the garden path and led astray by no less a person than the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), who persuaded her not to do her duty.

Mr. Cash: These revelations leave me completely dumbfounded. I sincerely hope that the reference in question will not be expunged from the record, on the ground that it contains a scurrilous attack upon the hon. Member for Cynon Valley. I invite her to intervene if the allegation of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) is untrue. However, as the hon. Lady, as on the previous occasion, has decided not to challenge me by intervening on this point, I have to infer that it must be carried in favour of Conservative Members.

In view of the attacks that have been made upon Conservative Members, other substantive points have to be put on record. I recall that during the Second Reading debate reference was made to the Transport and General Workers Union. I am tempted to ask myself, as I did on Second Reading, whether the activities of the Opposition have anything to do with TGWU policy. I invite the Opposition to dispute that point with me, if they wish to do so. There seems to be a strange connection between the TGWU and the importance of enterprise both to the people of Felixstowe and those in the areas adjoining Felixstowe. Could it be that the TGWU — in other words the Labour party and its representatives on the other side of the House—wishes to deny the people of Felixstowe the job and enterprise opportunities that the Bill offers?

Mr. Loyden: The TGWU is concerned about all its members, including those in the ports of Liverpool, Bristol and Southampton. The union has to take an overall view. It will defend the rights of the Felixstowe workers, but it will not—and in my view it should not—adopt a policy that would result in an increase of labour in one port at the expense of a diminution of labour in another port. It is not the job of trade unions to create further unemployment in areas such as Merseyside. Unemployment there is already high.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that philosophical point. He has made it quite clear that a balancing act takes place within the TGWU. It believes that prosperity in a given area depends upon the diminution of prosperity in another area. The Felixstowe dock and harbour proposals are generating enterprise in that area. I am sure the hon. Gentleman agrees that enterprise opportunities should be equally available in his area.

It would be unfortunate if a dog-in-the-manger attitude were to develop. For reasons that may have something to do with the activities of Militant Tendency in his part of the country, the Liverpool dock and harbour system is not merely crumbling into the River Mersey; it is falling into it. It would be sad if the people of Felixstowe had to face a similar catastrophe. Conservative Members would resist it at all costs.

We wish the hon. Gentleman's area to be prosperous, just as we wish the area that is now under discussion to be prosperous. *[Interruption.]* The amount of barracking that is to be heard because I have made that perfectly sensible point merely illustrates the difference between the attitude of Conservative Members and the attitude of the Opposition. We want the whole of this country to be prosperous. The Opposition want only those areas that they can pick and choose to be prosperous, which means only those parts of the country where they have an electoral advantage. They seem unable to understand the idea of something being created virtually out of nothing, as is the case with Felixstowe. It was the late lamented Keith Wickenden, whom I knew and who used to be the Member of Parliament for Dorking, who had the initiative and enterprise to start this great venture. By carrying the Bill over to the next Session we shall be paying tribute to the memory of a great man of enterprise.

I have referred to what the hon. Member for Cynon Valley rather quaintly described as a carry-on motion. I have some sympathy with her choice of words, but it might be helpful to remind the House of the circumstances in which such motions arise.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I move, That the Question be now put?

Mr. Speaker: I shall not accept that motion until the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has finished his speech. After that, I shall consider it.

Mr. Cash: The circumstances are set out in page 1041 in the 20th edition of "Erskine May" under the heading, "Further suspension of bills". I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for not ending my speech, as this is an important issue which is germane to the subject under discussion, and it often crops up in regard to private Bills.

Because the private Bill procedure is essentially judicial, it is important to have continuity between one Session and the next to ensure that important private business, in the course of which many people have gone to considerable trouble, time and often expense—I refer to petitioners for the Bill and objectors to it——

Mr. Sedgemore: Say something that we understand.

Mr. Cash: That is an interesting intervention. I am merely referring to "Erskine May". The carry-over motion——

Mr. Sedgemore: I have not understood a word for 10 minutes.

Mr. Cash: I am disturbed to hear that. In his books, one of which is suitably entitled, "Power Failure" and another of which is called "Mr. Secretary of State", the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) describes himself——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is a bit wide of the Felixstowe dock and I cannot relate the carry-over motion to it.

Mr. Cash: Perhaps I might just finish my sentence. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch describes himself as a practising barrister, but if ever there was a case of the hon. Gentleman demonstrating that he could not handle a dock brief, this is it.

I hope that by that slight aside I have demonstrated — [HON. MEMBERS: "This is a filibuster."] I am demonstrating——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has finished his speech relative to the matter and would you now accept the closure?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I said that I would not accept the closure until the hon. Gentleman had finished. He has been speaking for a good length of time and I think that he is making his point.

Mr. Cash: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that I am making a relevant point about the carry-over motion. I can do no better than refer to that part of "Erskine May" which specifically deals with the suspension of Bills. I cannot think of anything that is more germane and relevant to the proceedings in question — [HON. MEMBERS: "Filibuster."] If I may proceed despite the barracking and the filibustering that is taking place on the Opposition Benches, I shall get to the point that I wish to make.

The conduct of the Bill and whether or not it is to be carried over is directly related to the procedures that are hallowed by the words of "Erskine May". I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, know all about this.

Mr. Sedgemore: Get on with it.

Mr. Cash: It is important that Opposition Members, as they do not have any interest in the matter whatsoever, should have the benefit of what is said in "Erskine May". As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has reached for the book in question, I refer him to page 1041.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): I have come into the chamber because I am interested in what is being discussed. I have looked at the list of Members who have spoken, and I note that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who is now

accusing my hon. Friend of filibustering, spoke for 32 minutes. That was a filibuster of the worst order, and my hon. Friend should be allowed to continue.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): In view of what is happening on the Conservative Benches, I think we ought to put it to you again, Mr. Speaker, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to accept that, because I understand that the proposer of the motion has not yet spoken, although he moved it formally.

Hon. Members: No, he did not.

Mr. Cash: I have only one more point to make. With reference to suspension orders, "Erskine May" states:

"Members may speak more than once in debates on suspension motions, and having spoken to the main question may then move amendments."

In view of that and the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) wishes to speak more than once in the debate, I am glad to sit down.

9.28 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths: In view——

Hon. Members: With the leave of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not need the leave of the House to speak again.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker. Because the unusual nature of the procedure might not be entirely familiar to hon. Members, I thought it would be helpful if I brought "Erskine May" with me and quoted the relevant section. With regard to motions dealing with the suspension of Bills until the following Session, "Erskine May" states:

"Members may speak more than once in debates on suspension motions".

That is what I am proposing to do.

At the beginning of the debate, I confined myself simply to supporting the motion on the Order Paper in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means. I have not, therefore, in any way dealt with the issues that have been raised, quite properly, by Opposition members. The most important thing to recognise is that the House has been seized of this matter for a total of 160 hours, a great proportion of which was spent in Committee.

Mr. Sedgemore: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We all know that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has already spoken. Is it your intention to allow all of us to make another speech?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) moved the motion formally, as I understand it — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Well, that is what the hon. Gentleman told me. I understood that he had moved the motion formally.

Mr. Sedgemore: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was in the House when the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds proposed the motion, and he made a speech; he did not move it formally.

Mr. Cash: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall give a ruling on this. I understand from "Erskine May" that it is possible for hon. Members to speak more than once on a suspension motion.

Mr. Sedgemore: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I return to my original point. As the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has already made a very forceful and able speech, is it your intention to allow other hon. Members to speak again?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, according to "Erskine May", hon. Members may speak again.

Mr. Boyes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that, as a point of clarification, it must be stated that the motion was not moved formally. In fact, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) spoke for a minimum of five minutes, and possibly for a little longer. The record will show that. I think that that must be taken into consideration when you make your ruling.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do you accept that the fact that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has the right to speak twice does not prevent you from accepting a speech only once or from accepting a closure motion? You are not in any way prevented from accepting a closure motion because the hon. Member is seeking to catch your eye for a second time. On that basis, I ask you once again whether you will accept a closure motion.

Mr. Speaker: I shall not do so at this point. The debate can continue until 10 o'clock, and it is already half-past nine. I am not prepared to accept a closure motion at this stage. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has quoted from "Erskine May". He has spoken more than once, and other hon. Members may also do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the record will show that you said that you would be inclined to take a closure motion at the end of the speech of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash)——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The record will show that. The hon. Member for Stafford has finished his speech. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds caught your eye and has exercised his right to speak. Surely, Mr. Speaker, you can accept a closure motion. You gave us——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with that point. I may have misunderstood what the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds said to me, but I thought that he had moved the motion formally. He speaks for the promoters of the Bill and has the right to speak again. However, I hope that he will do so briefly so that we may then come to a conclusion.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. Lest there be any misunderstanding of what I said to you, I want to make it clear that I spoke at the beginning of the debate very formally because I dealt only with the procedural points. It would not be correct to say, nor did I intend you to understand me to say, Mr. Speaker, that I had merely moved the motion formally. In fact, the Chairman of Ways and Means placed the motion upon the Order Paper and I spoke to his motion. I very scrupulously avoided going into the substance of the matter because I understood this to be largely a procedural debate.

However, as the debate has developed, inevitably — and I suppose rightly — hon. Members have gone into the substance of the Bill. It was quite impossible for the Chair to prevent that. It is only right that, as I have been

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

speaking for the promoters of the Bill during the long hours that the House has been seized of this matter, some of the questions that have been raised about the Bill and the intentions of the promoters should now be answered. It would make for an inadequate debate, certainly not a debate that could be closed at this point, if the other side of the case were not put. I shall briefly do that.

One issue raised was whether the Committee had had adequate time or opportunity to consider the matters before it and the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) went into great detail about that. She was appointed to the Committee. It has always been my understanding that when one is appointed to a private Bill Committee by the House one has a duty to discharge the responsibilities of members of that Committee. The hon. Lady chose to absent herself. It is true, as I understand it, that she wrote to you, Mr. Speaker, about that, and no doubt you sent her a reply, but it is quite unacceptable for the hon. Lady to come to the House and say that there was no opportunity to consider the Bill fully in Committee when she had voluntarily removed herself from the Committee.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend accept that in the review of private Bill procedure which is due to take place next Session one of the items that we might hope will be top of the agenda of the Procedure Committee will be that of people absenting themselves from Committees, as a result of which there is grave inconvenience to the petitioners, the Committee and the public in general?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: That may be, but I am dealing strictly with what has been said on the Floor of the House tonight on the subject of the Bill. I say again, in case the hon. Lady did not hear me, that it is not satisfactory for her to complain that the Committee was not able to deal with the issues put before it when she removed herself from the Committee and did not listen.

In view of the hon. Lady's speech, it is also right to say that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), who spoke at some length on this matter, quoted the relevant passages from "Erskine May" which make it clear beyond peradventure that the hon. Lady should have stayed on the Committee and done her duty. She went to him and he said that he had advised her——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understood that the hon. Member wanted specifically to reply to today's debate. He is going back over earlier debates. Hon. Members on both sides of the House, although concerned about this matter, are also concerned about the debate on Stansted. As I understand it, there is an extension for an hour and a half, but many hon. Members had understood that there would be a vote at about 9.30 pm so that there would be a reasonable distribution of time between the two debates. We were led to believe that there would be some sympathy from the Chair for a closure at about 9.30. I press the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) to reply to this debate and not to the earlier debates.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I hardly need any advice from the hon. Gentleman about delaying this matter. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley made a complaint, to which I have responded. I am entitled to quote the fact that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said this:

"She therefore came to me . . . I advised her to quit the Committee. I said to her, 'Go down in history, Ann, and be bloody well fined.'" — [*Official Report*, 12 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 1040].

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) would care to tell us who the hon. Member for Hamilton is.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I beg pardon. I am speaking about the hon. Member for Fife, Central. His remarks in *Hansard* make it clear that the complaints made by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley about this procedure were bogus. If she were unable to form a judgment on the Bill, it was because she accepted his advice to remove herself from proper consideration of the promoters' case, or the petitioners' case.

Mr. Speaker: Order. What does this have to do with the carry-over motion?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The hon. Lady——

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No. I am responding, as I must, to Mr. Speaker. The hon. Lady's earlier complaint was that she had been unable to form a judgment and that the motion should not be carried over because she had had inadequate time in which to consider the issues. I was replying to that point and I now move to the next one.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman has obviously missed the point. My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central has a sense of humour; the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has not.

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is with reluctance that I raise this matter. I am not one of those who usually raise points of order. The proceedings started with a point of order suggesting that there might have been a breach of privilege in a letter written by George Blackhall, the managing director of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, in which he talked about delay tactics by a small coterie of Labour Members. I am delighted about that. I have deposited a copy of the letter with the Clerks' Department. I believe that the debate is ending in farce. You, Mr. Speaker, ruled very carefully and precisely, as you usually do, and asked the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) to be brief and to the point. His remarks are neither brief nor to the point. Therefore, I should like to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Speaker: I have said three or four times that I am not prepared to accept that motion.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The second point made by way of objection to the carry-over motion is that there had been a change in the circumstances of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company as a result of the purchase of some shares in it by P and O. I have procured from the promoters a letter that makes it clear that they remain confident of their predictions about the tonnage that will need to be handled in Felixstowe and the absolute necessity to provide the new facilities which the Bill will allow. Therefore, the argument that the carry-over motion be denied because there has been a change in those circumstances is bogus.

Since the managing director's letter was quoted widely in support of that view, it is right that the House should be aware of what the managing director told me. In his letter of 22 October he stated:

"Some weeks ago, in the light of difficult trading conditions, I sent a letter to all of our 1,900 employees explaining the circumstances and emphasising the need for economies . . . Although the letter was a private communication and declared copyright, the Member for Ipswich who has vigorously and consistently opposed our Bill obtained a copy."

That letter was mentioned in the debate on the carry-over motion an hour or so ago. The managing director stated:

"Distorting its intention he"—

the hon. Member for Ipswich—

"publicly proclaimed it confirmed his long held contention that there was excess port capacity in the United Kingdom and as Felixstowe could not make use of its facilities extant he was even more determined in his opposition to the Bill".

The managing director concluded:

"Despite present and temporary shortfalls from our target figures . . . our confident predictions indicate by 1989 we shall need to expand our container handling capacity to meet increased demands."

There are figures to support that. The second objection to the carry-over motion falls to the ground.

Turning to the third objection, I quote the words of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). He said that in East Anglia there was a "gale" of opposition to the Bill. I refute that view. There is a gale of support for this carry-over motion so that the House may arrive at a conclusion on the Bill in due course.

Those who favour the expansion of this port include East Anglia's industrial, commercial and farming community. They include the regional organisations of the CBI and the Institute of Directors, all of the chambers of commerce, the Freight Transport Association, the Road Haulage Association and the East Anglian branches of the Transport and General Workers Union unanimously. They also include all the trade unions that are represented in the port of Felixstowe. Therefore, the objection put by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, that the carry-over motion be denied because there is a gale of opposition to it, falls to the ground. There is no such thing.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend have any light to throw on the fact that there was some original opposition to the Bill by the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), who on Second Reading spoke for half an hour, but so far today, for some reason which is obscure to the House, has not opened his mouth?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: That is a matter for the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch).

Let me deal now with the point made about the environmental problems. Several petitions were directed against the Bill on environmental grounds, but it is important to recognise what has happened. Suffolk county council at first objected. It then reached agreement with the promoters on a planning package, including everything from landscaping to noise, building control and nature conservation. Consequently, the Suffolk county council has agreed with the promoters that the carry-over motion is required and should be passed. Similarly, the Ipswich port authority was originally an objector but it reached agreement with the promoters on the navigational priorities and systems.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch also claimed that the Royal Yachting Association was opposed to the Bill. I have never identified him with the RYA, but I have to say that the RYA has reached agreement with the promoters. It wishes the Bill to proceed, and it would dissent completely from the manner in which the hon. Gentleman sought to pray the RYA in aid against the motion.

The local district council, the Suffolk Coastal council, was originally a petitioner, and would have originally opposed the carry-over motion, for it did not want the Bill to be passed. It has reached agreement on a 200-acre nature reserve and now I am confident that it would wish the carry-over motion to proceed.

I could go on. A whole range of petitions have been considered. In most cases there has been agreement between the promoters and the petitioners, and that is precisely what the private Bill procedure is intended to achieve.

The central issue in the debate tonight is whether the House of Commons should enable the next Session of Parliament to arrive at a decision. None of us can predict what that decision may be, but it is right that a Bill that has had an overwhelming vote on Second Reading, that has received a series of large majorities on the Floor of the House, and that has the clear support of a Committee of our fellow Members which considered it for 26 days should receive the mature consideration of the House.

What is proposed tonight is that a carry-over motion be denied so that the Bill is not determined on its merits and the House is not given an opportunity to judge and vote and determine in the national interest; it is simply proposed tonight that the whole matter shall dribble away in all the wrecking amendments and tactics that Labour Members have thrown against it. The carry-over motion has a long-standing tradition of support in the House. Four carry-over motions were carried yesterday without dissent. About 27 carry-over motions have been carried within the term of this Parliament. This carry-over motion is also entitled to be carried.

9.49 pm

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): As I was frequently mentioned by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), I must at this late stage reply to some of the main points that have been raised. I strongly resent the fact that the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company has accused some of my hon. Friends and myself of being a coterie responsible for the promotion of delaying tactics. I resent that because I have a strong constituency interest in this Bill. As everyone who has heard me speak on this matter knows, I have opposed the Bill from start to finish on grounds of principle, and I shall continue to do so.

In reply to a point that has been made frequently, I must say that I do not represent anyone at all in my opposition to the Bill. I received a letter this morning from the East Anglian branch of Friends of the Earth, thanking me for my opposition. It states:

"If this development goes ahead it seems to us that many 'safe' sites will be considerably 'less safe' and so we believe every effort must be made to save the area if conservation at a national level is to have any meaning at all."

That is a firm letter of support from Friends of the Earth in East Anglia. But more to the point is a letter from another environmental group saying that I should stand firm

"in the face of some hostile attacks from the few who are set to make huge financial gains."

That has been the important issue in this debate.

[Mr. Ken Weetch]

I oppose the Bill being carried over. Moreover, it should not be discussed again in the next Session of Parliament without the promoters, the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, having to go right back to the beginning to explain themselves again in the light of the new points that have emerged not only in these debates but outside the House.

The only sound thing that has gone into the Bill so far is the new clause on environmental control, which was carried a little while ago on Report as part of the first group of amendments. It is self-evident that there is still much to be said on Report, especially as clause 4 starts in a piecemeal and hole-in-the-corner way to dismantle the national dock labour scheme. If the Government wish to do anything about that scheme, they should have the honesty to put it formally to the House and should not act in a hole-in-the-corner way.

My opposition to the Bill is not party political. From time to time I have to report to my general management committee on what I am doing about the Bill. It constantly asks why I so often receive support from card-carrying Conservatives in the constituency. Political opinion in that part of East Anglia is very divided.

I do not adopt a political stance. My interest in the Bill stems from the fact that it fundamentally affects my constituency. When the whole thing first began, I saw the work force in the port of Ipswich. I held an emergency meeting with it as soon as the Bill's shape had become known. Those people expressed their fears for the long-term future of their jobs, and they have been behind me from the beginning.

Whatever else the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company is, it is not daft; on the other hand, it cannot always be right. In the local press and elsewhere it has said that I must feel some malevolence towards the whole issue, as I disagree with the Bill. But I feel no such malevolence; this is a constituency issue from start to finish. I have already expressed grave concern about the long-term future of the port of Ipswich.

One fear has not been quelled by the arguments adduced; that is, that a free-for-all in port development would disrupt the port framework of East Anglia. We have already had one example. Nearly 100 jobs have been lost at Harwich. It was nothing to do with my constituency, so I did not become involved, but the warning was writ large. When Freightliner transferred its operations from Parkeston Quay to Felixstowe, there was a sharp lesson to be drawn about what would happen to jobs in Ipswich if excess port capacity was developed in East Anglia.

The extra capacity proposed is not needed in any shape or form. Two things will result from it. First, there will be a cut-throat war in an attempt to attract deep-sea trade from elsewhere, which will affect many other deep-sea ports in Britain. Secondly, and even more importantly, if there is any commercial shortfall in trade, there will be an immediate push for short-sea container trade and disruption throughout East Anglia, with Ipswich in the front line.

In opposing the carry-over motion, I should point out that no one is threatening one job in Felixstowe, but that there is a real threat to jobs elsewhere. We have had recent evidence from the company concerning the need for economy. When the memorandum from the managing director of the company, Mr. Blackhall, came round, it was marked "copyright" in order, I understand, to prevent me from quoting at length from it in the local press——

Sir Anthony Grant *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put——

The House proceeded to a Division:

Mr. Boyes *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that on a number of occasions, Opposition Members proposed the closure. Before my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) rose to speak, the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) spoke for 21 minutes and the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) spoke for 20 minutes. My hon. Friend spoke for only 10 minutes and then you accepted the closure motion. Some of the points made by Conservative Members were well wide of the motion and it is important that they are answered. I think that it is a little unfair — if I might use that word — for you to accept the closure at this time after turning down our application. Conservative Members were well wide of the mark and you had to remind them to get to the point.

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that this debate would normally run for three hours. When the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) rose, I understood that he was the last hon. Member who wished to speak. As it happens, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) rose, as was his right, to speak again. Then the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) rose. It is normal for the Chair to accept the closure at one minute to ten o'clock, and that is what I did.

The House having divided: Ayes 174, Noes 39.

Division No. 299] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony

Key, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Eldon Griffiths and
Mr. Tim Yeo.

NOES

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Dalyell, Tam
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Godman, Dr Norman
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McNamara, Kevin
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Parry, Robert
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Stott, Roger
Weetch, Ken

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Lloyd and
Mr. Peter Pike.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 167, Noes 38.

Division No. 300] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard

van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Eldon Griffiths and
Mr. Jonathan Sayeed.

NOES

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Dalyell, Tam
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Godman, Dr Norman
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McNamara, Kevin
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Parry, Robert
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Stott, Roger
Weetch, Ken

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Lloyd and
Mr. Peter Pike.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid.

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session.

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table with the New Clause as added on Consideration of the Bill as amended.

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.

To be communicated to the Lords, and their concurrence desired thereto.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the adjourned Debate on the Question proposed on 21st October relating to the British Railways (Stansted) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until half-past Eleven o'clock.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

British Railways (Stansted) Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 October],

That the Promoters of the British Railways (Stansted) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.

Question again proposed.

10.25 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I hope that the House will support the direction by the Chairman of Ways and Means about a carry-over motion on the British Railways (Stansted) Bill. I should remind hon. Members that the direction provides for the promoters of the Bill to have leave to supend the proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament.

The Bill has had full consideration and was originally debated on 24 February. That debate was adjourned and resumed on 3 June when the Bill was given a Second Reading. It was referred to a Select Committee which sat for three days hearing evidence and it was reported and the preamble approved on 10 July. It now awaits its consideration.

As hon. Members will know, the Bill provides powers for British Rail to anticipate the development of the Stansted airport terminal and to make arrangements to ensure that a rail link is available when that development takes place in 1990. Much of the discussion about the Bill dealt not with the rail link itself but with the juxtaposition of the Stansted proposal and the proposal for Manchester.

In 1984, I spoke on the Second Reading of the British Railways Bill by which powers were given to British Rail to provide the rail link. There has been a great deal of discussion on this matter and hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed strong feelings. It is perhaps in everybody's recollection that a meeting took place on Friday 24 October between the British Railways Board, the Manchester passenger transport authority and representatives of Manchester International Airport plc to see whether a way out of this difficulty could be found. I am happy to be able to tell the House that an agreement has been signed which appears to break the deadlock and that there is every chance of real progress.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that British Rail has now told its investment board that there is a commitment by British Rail to put up its part of the money?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Unfortunately, I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question. This is essentially a planning Bill, and for that reason I am unable to give him the answer that he seeks. I have no doubt that British Rail will take note of the hon. Gentleman's point, and of course the Minister responsible is also in the House. In the letter of 27 October, it is made clear that the agreement that was discussed last Friday is now in being. I hope that it takes account of the point that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): The hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) mentioned the relationship of the Manchester rail link to the Stansted rail link. If the carry-over motion is approved, hon. Members will expect by the time of the Third Reading in the next Session to see a financial commitment by the British Railways Board and positive progress on the Manchester rail link. Will we get that commitment?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Clearly I should like to be able to say yes to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), and I am sure that British Rail would like to give the same answer. However, we have to see how this agreement works. As I have said, the first meeting was held last Friday and it seems that all sides are satisfied with the progress. I am sure that the board will take note of the hon. Gentleman's point.

After a somewhat difficult time, we are now making progress on all fronts. I hope that the House will therefore pass the carry-over motion.

10.30 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The House is aware, from earlier debates, of my interest in this legislation. I have opposed it on the very strong grounds that a Stansted airport rail link should not be sanctioned in advance of a firm agreement to proceed with a Manchester airport rail link. At last we have had some good news about the Manchester rail link, and I pay tribute tonight to hon. Members on both sides of the House who worked long and hard to make possible the agreement that was reached in Manchester last Friday between British Rail, the passenger transport authority, the passenger transport executive and Manchester Airport plc. It has the makings of a famous victory, and it is good news not just for Greater Manchester but for the north-west as a whole.

With many of my hon. Friends, I argued in earlier debates that it was palpably wrong to sanction new investment at Stansted in the south-east before meeting the prior claims of Manchester, in a region so very badly stricken by unemployment as the north-west. What we need to hear tonight is a positive response from the Minister to the agreement that was reached last Friday and that he will be meeting the parties at a very early date.

Two matters remain to be agreed and will need to be discussed with the Secretary of State. First, there are the difficulties facing the PTA in providing firm commitments on the future of supportive services from Piccadilly in central Manchester to the airport, notwithstanding the PTE's view that the rail link will strengthen the viability

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

of existing services on the Styal line. Secondly, there are British Rail's similar difficulties in giving commitments to the PTA on its services outside the PTA area.

It will also be necessary for the parties to discuss with the Secretary of State the need to exploit external funding opportunities—for example, from EEC grants. I hope that tonight the Minister will indicate his right hon. Friend's readiness to hold an early meeting with the parties and that we shall now be given a pledge of his practical support for our determination to see the opening of the Manchester rail link within the time scale envisaged in Manchester last Friday.

The Secretary of State has not so far met the parties to last Friday's agreement. It was his predecessor. the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) who met them, together with the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) and myself, at the Department of Transport in May of this year. A further meeting at the Department is thus now both very important and urgent.

It is on the assumption, based on his correspondence with me and the oral reply that I had from him in the House last week, of a positive response from the Secretary of State that I hope not to have to oppose the motion tonight. I know that British Rail understands my grounds for opposing the legislation so far, and I trust that it will now no longer be necessary to oppose it further.

10.33 pm

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I do not intend to oppose the carry-over motion, for two reasons. First, the agreement is now in being. I understand that, although the agreement is not yet before the investment committee of British Rail, it is likely to come before it in the next few weeks. Therefore, we should be able to take further action against the British Railways (Stansted) Bill in time, if that matter is not pursued with the vigour that we all demand. Until we see the details and the whites of their eyes, we are quite happy to support the motion.

Secondly, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) was not quite right. The present Secretary of State also took part in discussions at Manchester airport on this matter more recently than the meeting to which the right hon. Gentleman referred.

Ministers have been involved to a considerable extent, and they have given us a great deal of support. In the remaining issues that concern them—many do not, but instead concern BR and the local authority—I hope and believe that we can rely on my hon. Friend to give the Department's full support for seeing that the outstanding matters are settled.

10.35 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): The motion is strictly procedural, and I shall speak simply to advise the House of the Government's view.

We made it clear in the airports policy White Paper that we would be pleased to approve a rail link to Stansted airport if there was a commercial case. I reaffirmed that on Second Reading. British Rail has shown that there is a commercial case, and we have given approval. British Rail now needs powers to build the link so that it will be ready by 1991, when the new terminal at Stansted is due to come into operation. The Government therefore support the motion.

It is correct to say that, in May, the parties to the Manchester airport link met my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State, now the Secretary of State for the Environment, and me and were asked to reassess the financial contribution that they were prepared to make and to come forward with proposals. I have been very pleased to learn that the parties concerned with the proposed rail link have recently made considerable progress on a possible cost-sharing arrangement. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have full details of the proposals, we will examine them urgently and be pleased to discuss them. We will, of course, have to examine the details carefully in the light of the normal criteria for public expenditure control. I cannot say more until we have the proposals in front of us. The House will note this indication of BR's good intentions, and I hope that that will be welcomed and not dismissed with ingratitude tonight.

If the motion is carried, the House will have further opportunities to consider the arguments for and against the Bill on the basis of the Select Committee on Transport's recommendations. I therefore urge the House to allow the Bill to be carried over.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: There were rumours, at least on this side of the House, that the Minister would make this statement with enthusiasm. We fail to see much enthusiasm in this. Could he not show a little enthusiasm and draw attention to the considerable advantages not just to the Greater Manchester area or the north-west, but to the whole of the country, of having one of our most important international airports linked to the national rail network?

Mr. Mitchell: I have frequently expressed my support for matters that are of concern to Manchester and its Members of Parliament. It would be imprudent of me to give a firm blessing to something about which I do not have the details and when I have not yet received a formal application from the parties. They will come back to the Secretary of State and, when they do, we will listen carefully to what they say. I hope that it will be found that we can take the proposals forward.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Minister asked us to accept with good grace what has been achieved, but it is difficult for us to know whether there is similar good grace in the Government, especially when the hon. Gentleman uses a phrase such as "subject to the constraints on public spending". He must be aware that such a phrase sends a chill down the spines of Opposition Members. Would he like to spell out the circumstances in which that would cause a problem?

Mr. Mitchell: It is a straightforward matter, and the hon. Member need not get excited about it. BR has a normal procedure for investment appraisal, which comes to Ministers as part of their assessment of public expenditure control, to which the hon. Gentleman took exception. That is a standard part of the procedure and we cannot give detailed examination of this proposal until it is in front of us.

The parties will be welcome to come back to the Secretary of State, as suggested by his predecessor. When

they do so, they will be warmly welcomed, with whatever proposals they have for further examination. I hope that the House will allow the Bill to be carried over in the usual way and to agree the motion before us, especially in the light of the fair wind which I have described in regard to the Manchester proposal.

10.40 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The House will be grateful to the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson), as this is the third occasion on which I heard him speak on the motion. If the motion is carried tonight, we will have something to look forward to after the Queen's Speech because, presumably, we shall hear a fourth speech from the hon. Gentleman.

Congratulations are due to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), to my hon. Friends the Members for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), and for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester). I do not believe that the motion would be accepted tonight, as I hope that it will, without their efforts on behalf of Manchester airport.

Without introducing a controversial note into the proceedings, I will fire a warning shot across the Minister's bows—if such a metaphor is appropriate in the railway context. The Minister said that we must not be guilty of ingratitude, but he has not given us anything yet. There is an implicit promise in what he has said but, as they used to say in the Whips Office, "There is no cough."

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that what is before the House is a British Railways Bill and it was to British Railways that I suggested that the gratitude might be appropriate.

Mr. Snape: It is not for me to presume gratitude to British Rail on behalf of my hon. Friends.

It is significant that, although it looks as though we shall get the go-ahead — depending on the financial contribution or whatever the term is in the gobbledegook that is written for the Minister—for the railway line to Ringway airport, we are not exactly comparing like with like when we compare Manchester with Stansted.

I appreciate that this motion concerns Stansted but, without sounding too ungracious or giving way to the ingratitude which the Minister suggested may be implicit in my remarks, it is fair to say that, solely because of the opposition of my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Withington, Manchester will get a railway line.

It will not be built on the same basis as that at Stansted because there will be a significant cost to the passenger transport executive in Manchester. No doubt the Minister will say that the final arrangements have not arrived on his desk. There will be a 50p supplement to every passenger using the line but the line at Stansted, which is the subject of the motion, a virtual greenfield site, is built courtesy of the taxpayer. As the Minister continually reminds us, the taxpayer funds British Rail to a large extent.

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that it is a commercial proposition and not one funded by the taxpayer.

Mr. Snape: The Minister may know that, but I do not. I am sure that there is a good bit of juggling and financial sleight of hand between the Department and British Rail to justify this.

The greenfield site at Stansted is an exaggeration but it is hardly the busiest airport in the United Kingdom. Yet proposals have been before the House for some considerable time to extend the airport.

I do not know how good a financial wizard the Minister is. Not too many miles from here is the biggest international airport in the world, and so far neither his wizardry nor British Rail's financial acumen has managed to prove a case for building a main line railway into Heathrow. If the Minister uses the same calculations as he uses to justify the financial case for a railway into Stansted, I have no doubt that there will not just be a two-track or a four-track railway into Heathrow, but that it will be like Clapham junction all the way from a major London terminus. If the Minister wishes to blind us with science on the financial aspects of the proposals, he should put some figures before us.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I have listened to these Front Bench exchanges with some interest. There have been some interesting metaphors. The Minister talked about fair winds and my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) followed that with threats of shots across the bows. May I offer a similar threat in connection with the Scottish airports? I sincerely hope that Prestwick, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen will be treated with similar sympathy when their infrastructural needs and expectations come up for discussion.

Mr. Snape: If I followed my hon. Friend down that flight path, you might call me to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The best advice that I can give my hon. Friend, judging from our experience during the past year or so, is that if he is worried about the future of the Scottish airports, he should block a few Bills in the House. Who knows what financial sleight of hand the Minister would use to justify expenditure north of the border?

We give the measure a qualified welcome. I have no doubt that my hon. Friends will return to the matter in due course, and I hope that once we have heard yet another eloquent speech from the hon. Member for New Forest, we can complete the railway line into Stansted, one into Manchester and, if there is any financial sense behind those proposals, eventually a surface railway into Heathrow.

10.46 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I begin to get the impression that I am an uninvited guest at my own birthday party.

I should make it clear that I am in favour of the motion. Although I have objected to the Bill, those objections have been removed and my feelings on the matter are reflected by the majority of opinion in my constituency. The decision having been taken on the development of Stansted airport, it is only sensible that the airport is planned and designed to the highest possible standards. There will be no excuse for failing in those respects. It is sensible to build in a rail link at the beginning, because it will provide the most effective transition from rail to aircraft at almost any airport in the United Kingdom. On balance, it will probably be better environmentally if people can reach the airport efficiently by rail rather than by road.

One of my principal reservations was that the rail service might be unable to bear the added strain of extra

[Mr. Alan Haselhurst]

trains. I have no wish for the regular passengers in my constituency to be inconvenienced further, because they have had a bad time on that line for many years. British Rail has gone a long way towards satisfying me that the position will be improved, and I am persuaded that more investment in that railway line is the key to better services. Although I have not finished my discussions with British Rail about further improvements in the overall service, it must be right to establish the rail link into Stansted without further significant delay.

I should add, partly because of my former connections with the north-west, that I am delighted that there has been progress in the provision of a rail link for Manchester airport. I hope that the discussions will be completed without too much delay and that my hon. Friend the Minister will take a generous and broadly supportive attitude towards it. I hope that there will not be too much emphasis on the nitty gritty and the small print. The important principle of balance between the north and the south must be satisfied. The Government will be thankful if the extra capacity that Manchester represents can be used to the full. There have already been warnings that the south-eastern airports system may be under strain.

Many of us believe that there has been a bias towards the south-east, and if that can be relieved by the greater exploitation of Manchester we would welcome that as being in the national interest. I hope that this matter can go ahead, that the House will agree that we can come back to this in the next Session, and that the Bill is not lost, so that we can tie up the matter satisfactorily. I hope that the Government will regard it as a happy situation that they have the approval of those concerned with the Stansted end of things and are now close to getting the approval of hon. Members on both sides of the House representing the north-west area, and that they will think that that is a job well done and be thankful.

10.50 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I wish to put on record my support for the Stansted link. I agree with the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) that this is right, and it is common sense to put in that public rail link now. I hope that the Bill will go through with alacrity in the next Session.

I congratulate those hon. Members representing the Manchester area, who have pulled off a coup. I hope that the negotiations for getting the rail link into Manchester, which I support, will quickly be brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

I agree with the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) that we must put in a public rail link to Heathrow as soon as possible. It will be complicated, but there is no point in trying to deal with the traffic problems of London, with all the difficulties in getting out to, and back from, Heathrow, if we are not serious about getting a major public rail link into Heathrow. I am sure that the Minister has taken that on board. I realise that that will be extremely expensive, and there will be problems, such as where it is brought into, which are being reviewed. However, it would make a great deal of sense if this were pulled off as well.

When Heathrow was first developed, such a rail link was planned, but it has never been developed, although we built an airport at Gatwick that happened to be a great success. I never thought that the Stansted link should have been held back because of Manchester, but hon. Members representing that area have managed to pull off a deal. All power to their elbow.

10.52 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) has fought hard to protect the interests of his constituents, and those of us who have difficulties with proposed new transport systems will have a great deal of sympathy with him, and hope that he will get the safeguards that he requires. It is interesting that he has been big enough to support this proposal wholeheartedly.

The decision on Stansted airport was taken because many hon. Members desired to create jobs in the United Kingdom and not in Schiphol. That being so, it is unthinkable that we should even contemplate building a modern airport without the facility of a rail link to it. I am delighted to hear that progress has been made on the Manchester link, and I wish that well. It would clearly be foolish not to take steps now to provide the necessary link for a future expanded airport at Stansted. Those of us who have occasion to use both Heathrow and Gatwick airports know the considerable difference between trying to get to the one and trying to get to the other.

I hope that if I have the privilege to introduce a Bill to promote a rail link with the new Kent international airport, that will also have a fair wind, and I hope that this Bill will have the carry-over right.

10.53 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Minister asked us to be gracious in our acceptance, but we are still in the position that we should almost bite his hand off, if it were there to bite. His remarks were less than fulsome, although we can read between the lines. I agree with the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) that we shall be returning to this should matters not work out, although everybody hopes that matters will progress smoothly.

The Minister may find himself in difficulty in committing himself wholeheartedly to what I am about to say. It seems logical to those of us from Manchester that, if the Manchester rail link is approved, there should be no barrier to the Department of Transport wholeheartedly and fulsomely backing an application to the European Community for help under section 56. Is the Minister prepared to comment?

Mr. David Mitchell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Lloyd: Well, we shall return to that point. This is an important matter. It is unusual for a Minister, especially under this Government, not to take the opportunity to say that he is prepared to spend someone else's money. There will be no cost to the Exchequer because all the domestic money will be spent by either British Rail or local Manchester bodies.

I thank the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) because, as a lapsed northerner, he gave some assistance. That may be the only kind comment I make about him. My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), who could not be present because of another engagement, gave great assistance also. It is recognised that, if properly built and constructed as part of an adequate rail system, a rail link into Manchester will

benefit not just the Manchester area. We are talking not about a commuter line but about one that shows acceptance of the fact that Manchester is a national airport and opens it up to national traffic. Your role, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should not go unrecognised, but perhaps I should not say more on that.

We hope that there is good will on all sides so that the link goes ahead. We look forward to seeing what happens in the next few weeks and to ensuring that the north-west has an airport fitting to the region. The area is certainly in need of the link.

10.56 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: I thank the hon. Members for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) for their support. I assure hon. Members from the north-west, including my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester), that the board recognises that it is important that a proper decision is made before Third Reading. We want to make progress. I assure hon. Members also that account will be taken of their message and that there will be no undue delay. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his remarks and I hope that the House will approve the motion for the carry-over.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the British Railways (Stansted) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.

To be communicated to the Lords, and their concurrence desired thereto.

British Railways Board (Grant)

10.57 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I beg to move,

That the draft British Railways Board (Increase of Compensation Limit) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

As the House knows, the financial support arrangements for British Rail's passenger services were provided by Parliament in the Railways Act 1974. This Act made the Secretary of State responsible for deciding what level of passenger service the board should provide beyond what is commercially viable. The Act also made the Secretary of State responsible for paying the board grant to meet the costs of these non-commercial services which could not be covered from the railways' own income. This is known as the public service obligation, or PSO, grant.

The same Act applied a statutory limit to the cumulative amount of grant which the Secretary of State could pay to British Rail without seeking parliamentary approval. The limit was originally set, in 1974, at £900 million, extendable to a total of £1·5 billion by Order in Council, subject to the approval of the House. This total limit has twice been changed, by the Transport Act 1978 and by the Transport (Finance) Act 1982. The present restriction limits payments of grant for periods after the end of 1978 to £6 billion, extendable by Order in Council to £10 billion, again subject to the approval of the House.

The position by the end of this month will be that, since the end of 1978, cumulative payments of public service obligation grant to British Rail will have reached £5·768 billion. To meet the Government's firm commitment to support British Rail's non-commercial railway services, payments will need, some time early in 1987, to exceed the limit of £6,000 million. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) on 11 July that the current estimate presented to the House last March makes provision for grant payments £100 million in excess of the present limit. There can be no question of grant expenditure in excess of the limit, and he said then that an order would be laid for the approval of the House to increase the statutory ceiling. This is the necessary order.

The order provides, as was done in previous orders in 1977 and 1981, for the full increase allowed by statute. It is sensible to provide sufficient finance to cover the lifetime of the new objectives set for the chairman by my right hon. Friend. Here is firm financial evidence of the Government's commitment to these socially necessary services. There is a clear message for British Rail and its customers. The message of this order and of the objectives which we set the board last week is that the support and commitment of the Government to the railway continues, that the excellent record of the board and its staff over the past three years will be built on and that our established policies for the railways are succeeding. The next three years will see further progress towards higher quality and greater cost-effectiveness.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is the Minister in a position to comment on recent press speculation, particularly in the Scottish newspapers, about the threatened diminution in the Euston to Glasgow central service and the expansion of the Waverley, Edinburgh to Kings Cross service? Can he assure the

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

House that the Euston to Glasgow service will not suffer the kind of diminution mentioned in some of the press reports?

Mr. Mitchell: Decisions on the matching of supply and demand with services on the alternate routes to Scotland is entirely a matter for British Rail's management and not for me. The hon. Gentleman will know, and I am sure will accept, that during the past three years one has seen, in Scotland, in the development of ScotRail's policies, considerable signs of improvement, with the rehabilitation and redecoration of the railway stations throughout the network, the opening of the Bathgate line to passenger transport, the first major renewal of a passenger service and a whole series of other improvements. Therefore, I hope he will feel that this is a good illustration of the success that has been achieved during the past three years and will recognise that the objectives that have been set by my right hon. Friend extrapolate those same objectives over the next three years.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister. As always, he is very graceful in giving way. I accept what he says about the improvements brought about in, say, Waverley station, Edinburgh, Glasgow central station, and Queen street station, Glasgow. I may say, en passant, that the stations in my constituency leave a lot to be desired. But putting that to one side, I was not asking a question about alternate services. That was the phrase the Minister used. The Glasgow central to Euston service can in no way be seen as an alternate or an alternative service to the Waverley, Edinburgh to Kings Cross service. Both are important in their own right. All that I am seeking, as a west of Scotland Member of Parliament, is that there will be no diminution in the quality and quantity of the service between Euston and Glasgow central.

Mr. Mitchell: I recognise that the services up the east coast main line to Edinburgh serve a different market from that served by the west coast mainline services to Glasgow from Euston, but the decisions about the services to be provided by Inter-City are commercial decisions for the management of the Inter-City sector of BR.

Our objectives maintain the policy established by the previous Labour Government that Inter-City should operate as a commercial business. I do not suppose that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) would disagree with that. Indeed, the Labour Government's 1977 White Paper entitled "Transport Policy" said:

> "The Government considers that within their general business, British Railways' Inter-City services should pay their way."

That means that the decision on how best to cater for their passengers and to pay their way rests with them.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Will my hon. Friend briefly define what the Government mean by socially necessary services?

Mr. Mitchell: That does not really apply in this case. I was referring to the matching of supply and demand.

Taking Inter-City out of grant, which was announced in 1984, is the natural realisation of the goal set by the Labour Government in their transport policy paper. We fully recognise the difficulties that this has presented. Our recent objectives reflect the problems by allowing the Board greater commercial freedom within its objectives for the non-grant-aided railway.

We have set a single target for all the businesses concerned rather than individual targets. That target, at 2·7 per cent., is of course less demanding than the 5 per cent. target to which the Inter-City business was previously working. However, I stress that our objectives also reflect the remarkable achievement of the sector in turning round its finances and the further improvements already planned.

I am tired of having the railways knocked by the Opposition. Here again we have an achievement for which the board deserves considerable credit. The sums of money required to support the railways are large, and the statutory limits reflect that. The grant settlement for this year is £712 million. That is a massive commitment by any standards, and it is right that the Government should ensure that the services that the grant buys are as cost-effective and efficient as possible. The House would properly be critical if we did not do that.

In setting objectives for the railway over the next three years we have also taken account of the clear wishes of the travelling public, which we and the board share, to see quality standards improving on the railways. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear to the House on 22 October, the grant savings that we are asking for on Network SouthEast and the provincial network are a modest 8 per cent. of their present grant of £605 million over three years. It takes account of the quality of service standards that we want the board to meet, and the board's estimate of expenditure necessary to meet those standards.

Our objective of continuing improvements in cost-effectiveness is consistent with our requirement of improved quality. Indeed, greater efficiency means more money for improvements in quality. Many parts of the railway network already enjoy excellent services. The recent sham indignation of Opposition Members conveniently ignored the improvements which are recognised by all who regularly travel round the country on the railways.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): What about Ministers' cars?

Mr. Mitchell: The railways have carried out nearly £3,000 million of investment since this Government came to power. This new investment has opened up higher standards of comfort and speed to large parts of the network which previously suffered from old, uncomfortable rolling stock which was also expensive to operate and unreliable.

In response to the sedentary intervention of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), I should say that I travel by train whenever that can be conveniently and properly done. Many rural branch lines and London commuter services now enjoy modern, clean and comfortable Sprinters, Pacers or electric multiple units. Stations are being refurbished, from London termini to small rural and commuter halts.

New passenger information systems are an increasingly visible sign of the hard work that the railways are putting into customer care. Much more is coming through—new rolling stock for Waterloo to Bournemouth and Weymouth, a completely new service, with new stock, linking north and south London via Kings Cross, the

Snow Hill tunnel and Blackfriars. I hope to see a new service to Stansted. More new Sprinters and Pacers and the new east coast mainline service are in the pipeline. I hope that before long we shall see the certitude of the Channel tunnel. The new state of the art ticket issuing machines are another sign of continuing progress on station modernisation.

The list is long of all the things that are being achieved as a result of the massive increase in investment by British Rail which we have permitted and encouraged.

The message is clear. The Government are not only committed to revenue support for socially necessary services, but they support necessary investment for a modern, efficient railway.

Sometimes I think that the Opposition are so set on pessimism and gloom that they do not want to see, or to recognise, the tremendous achievement by Sir Robert Reid, his board and staff. They persist in running down the railways' achievements, as the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has done time after time from the Dispatch Box. He may laugh, but I ask him to look at his previous speeches and at the comments by his hon. Friends only last week.

The railways' financial turnround since 1983 has been remarkable. The improvement in cost-effectiveness has not driven away customers or closed services, as some of our prejudiced critics insist on claiming. More people are using the railways and the network is increasingly being modernised. A total of 22 more stations have been opened, fare increases have been relatively modest, offset for many by reduced fare offers and the value of Capitalcard.

The forecasts of massive fare increases and sweeping cuts in services were wrong when they were made in 1983. They have been shown to be wrong by results since then, and they are wrong now. The Opposition owe it to British Rail and the public to cease their unfounded and inaccurate campaign against the railways and their successes, because they are beginning to achieve the improvements that we all seek.

11.12 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): If anything illustrates the weakness of delivering a prepared speech it is the Minister's contribution. He accused the Opposition of all sorts of things, yet he opened the debate. He realised the reasons for our mirth and claimed that he was referring to speeches in the past from the Opposition Front Bench about the state of British Rail.

I wish that the unreal world which the Minister described existed. I wish that I could congratulate Ministers on their efforts within British Rail. I fear that I should be straining credulity if I did that, because those of us who travel by train regularly know that when the service is on time it is probably as good as it is anywhere else in the world, but all too often it does not run to time because of factors which are not the responsibility of those who are charged with the day-to-day running of the system.

It is not just critics from the Opposition Benches who use strong words about the system's failings; those who have no political responsibility also use them. Organisations representing passengers, independent transport commentators and editorial writers feel strongly about the decline in our railway system and in its standards of service and comfort. Those who write to *The London Standard* are not my constituents or those of my right hon. and hon. Friends, but many of them are constituents of the Secretary of State. Are they the carping Left-wing critics to which the Minister referred? In some instances they draw attention to daily failures in punctuality in the part of the railway system that is now called Network SouthEast. Are they Left-wingers who wish only to denigrate the Government's achievements? They are not. The collective voice of disgruntlement about the standards of punctuality and comfort has risen to a new strength over the past few years and would drown the fairly weak paean of praise that the Minister has delivered so carefully from his prepared speech.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have listened to the hon. Gentleman indulging in the knocking, in which he so often engages, of British Rail in its efforts to provide commuter services into London. The punctuality target set by British Rail is 90 per cent. in the Network SouthEast area within five minutes. In the first quarter of this year, the target was met. In the second quarter, it was beaten. I am anxious to encourage British Rail to continue with these improvements. Instead of knocking British Rail, I invite the hon. Gentleman to join me in encouraging it and its staff to continue these improvements.

Mr. Snape: I am delighted to congratulate British Rail if the figures are as the Minister said. I do not take too kindly, however, to his view that Opposition Members should never criticise British Rail or the Government who are responsible for providing the financial wherewithal to maintain and improve its services. I do not need any lectures from the hon. Gentleman about the efforts of British Rail's staff to cope with a system that all too often is more than difficult to operate. On many routes at many times of the day it is almost impossible to operate.

Let us examine the Government's record. The publicity that was given to the announcement of the Secretary of State on 29 October was centered largely on the cuts in the public service obligation and the consequences for passengers in the south-east of England. However, the directive that he issued to the chairman of British Rail goes much wider than that. The directive refers to reducing PSO to £550 million at 1986-87 prices from the current £732 million. That reduction is to be achieved by 1989-90, and that does not include the passenger transport executive element of between £60 million and £70 million. The directive refers to a

"lower proportion of costs in Network SouthEast to come from grant and higher fares should be charged."

The Secretary of State became as indignant as he ever allows himself to be in the Chamber when he was accused by my hon. Friends and by some Conservative Members of being the cause of increased fares within Network SouthEast. I do not recollect his exact words, but he refuted the charge somewhat indignantly and implied that the reductions in grant could be met by the cliché of the Conservative party, which is "greater efficiency".

It is interesting to turn to the letter which the Secretary of State sent to Sir Robert Reid, the chairman of the British Railways Board, in which he stated:

"It is the Board's responsibility to determine fares".

That is the perpetual Government cop-out. In other words, he is saying, "We have reduced the amount of money that is available, but it is your 'responsibility to determine fares'." The right hon. Gentleman continued:

"but I want to see a lower proportion of the costs met by the taxpayer."

[Mr. Snape]

Perhaps, in the anglicised gobbledegook so loved by the right hon. Gentleman, that has nothing to do with a fare increase. He added:

"You should increasingly seek to reflect in your fares structure the cost of provision and improvements in quality of service."

While I did not attend the school at which the Minister was educated, I read those words as meaning that the board is expected to increase fares to meet the requirement to improve the quality of the service. It will have to increase fares anyway, because in the same announcement the right hon. Gentleman said that he would be reducing the amount of cash available.

He went on to deal with

"bus substitution to be considered for provincial services when reinvestment in new rolling stock or equipment is required."

That was a clarion call of support for the railways and those who provide equipment for them. He added, I thought remarkably;:

"railways should not compete unfairly with buses in the provincial sector."

I am not sure what he meant by that. I do not know whether his Department has briefed him properly, but he should know that, because of the strange way in which we calculate vehicle excise duty, buses are classed as hackney carriages, which means, for example, that a 52-seat coach pays about £15 a year less than a mini for a road fund licence. On the Department's figures, the bus and coach industry fails to meet its true track costs by about £150 million a year. So the Minister should examine carefully who is subsidising whom when he compares buses with trains.

The right hon. Gentleman continued:

"Freight, Freightliner, parcels, Travellers Fare and Inter-City services will be expected to earn a rate of return of 2·7 per cent. as a current cost operating profit on net assets when the businesses are taken together."

I defy anybody to describe that as a businesslike way of approaching the problems of running a national transport system. It means, taken literally, that if Travellers Fare puts up the cost of pork pies—while I congratulate the Minister on the abolition of the railway pork pie, I confess that, while I may be in the minority, I always enjoyed railway pork pies—to such an extent that Travellers Fare makes an enormous profit, then lumping the businesses together, Inter-City can make a whacking great loss because the two taken together will have met the Government's target.

It was significant that when my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) raised the question of the future of the inter-city service on the west coast, he did not receive an assurance from the Minister following a report in *The Guardian* recently about inter-city services on the west coast main line terminating at Preston. In view of the Minister's lukewarm response to my hon. Friend, that report could be based on fact.

Given the arbitrary and somewhat artificial way in which inter-city services are categorised, it would make economic sense, given the daft way we do our sums, for trains travelling north of Preston and stopping at various intermediate stations to be placed in the "other provincial services" category. In that case, they would be eligible for PSO grant, while the existing inter-city services running on exactly the same lines would be expected to make a profit. If one were trying to devise a crazy way to run the railways, that is the system one would not only introduce but seek to defend by criticising hon. Members who criticise it.

Dr. Godman: The route between Euston and Glasgow central is much more than a socially necessary route. It is popular with people in the west of Scotland and is capable of expansion in terms of the volume of passengers carried.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, and perhaps I should make it plain that my reason for making the comment is that the other provincial services are regarded as socially necessary. Not so the inter-city network, which is expected to make a profit from the arbitrary transference of one service to another. It makes no sense that trains between cities such as Liverpool and Hull should be regarded not as inter-city trains but as other provincial services, while trains between cities such as Manchester and London are regarded as inter-city. The difference between the two escapes me, other than that the former normally have the filthiest and most ancient and clapped-out rolling stock and locomotives that could be provided. The two do, in fact, connect English cities. Yet, by a quite arbitrary line—normally that of profit—one is classed a provincial service and the other is classed as part of an inter-city network.

Although the Minister might bluff and bluster about railway prospects, punctuality, comfort, and so on, the fact is that, taken together, his right hon. Friend's directives represent a further reduction in standards of service throughout the railway industry. What is interesting about the announcement on 21 October about London and south-east services, known as Network SouthEast, is that the portion of public service obligation was scheduled to increase marginally between 1986-87 and 1987-88. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor had one eye on a general election being held in one of those years. It was scheduled to increase from £222 million to £224 million — a marginal increase, but an increase nevertheless. The planned reduction in PSO in the Network SouthEast sector was 12 per cent. over three years. Existing levels of PSO are insufficient to allow BR to meet its quality of service objectives. If BR cannot meet the quality of service objectives now, how is it to do so when faced with a further reduction in grant?

Ministers have made much of the fact that British Rail has accommodated a cut of 25 per cent. in PSO over the past three years—that is, between 1983 and the end of the current financial year. However, they fail to point out the impact of the cut on both the quality of service for the rail user and salaries and working conditions of those for whom the Minister of State occasionally sheds crocodile tears—the railway staff.

I shall refer to the 1986 report of the Central Transport Consultative Committee. I hope that the Minister will not blacken the committee with the description "Left-wing critics" or "prejudiced critics"—the sort of description that he normally applies to Opposition Members.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): We? Three!

Mr. Snape: I am grateful to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary. I thought that he was the Minister responsible for roads. I shall in due course turn to his contributions to the nation's transport efforts.

Taken at random, some of the Central Transport Consultative Committee's comments do not quite fit the rosy picture of an efficient and comfortable railway system that the Minister likes to portray. The committee said:

"it is the CTCC's view that any overall fares increase next year above the rate of inflation cannot be justified when related to the present quality of service standards."

It continued:

"in some areas overcrowding has reached such intolerable proportions that additional resources should be made available."

It concluded its section on standards by saying:

"Passengers are not yet satisfied with the service provided."

I ask the Minister of State whether he accepts that criticism by the Central Transport Consultative Committee, or is it another plot hatched in Moscow or wherever to denigrate devoted Ministers presiding over Europe's best and most efficient railway system? Has the CTCC been nobbled by the wicked Left wingers, or does it have a point? British Rail obviously believes that it has a point, because, far from showing its agreement with transport users consultative committees up and down the country and raising standards in the way those committees have suggested, it has taken umbrage and has denied to those committees many of the statistics that they need to compile the facts on the decline in both standards of service and punctuality. It is sadly typical of the public sector under the Government that, no matter how bad things are, all one needs to do is to beef up the PR budget and chuck a few buckets of red paint about, to try to convince everybody who uses the railway system that the decline in the standard of service is in fact an increase.

How has British Rail managed to live with the reductions in PSO over the past three years? There have been redundancies in the industry, a reduction in standards, more overcrowding and less frequent trains on some lines, but most of the survival plan over the past few years has come about as a result of BR selling off its own assets. Since 1979, BR has sold almost £300 million of assets in an attempt to stay solvent. I know that the Government believe in the economics of the madhouse: if it makes money, one sells it, and if it loses money, one keeps it in the public sector and blames inefficient nationalised industries. But there is a limit to the amount of assets that are available to sell off to the highest bidder to keep the railway system turning over.

The consequences of the Government's attitude, particularly for Network SouthEast, are significant. Network SouthEast's call on PSO this year was about £210 million. As we understand it, BR intends raising fares in Network SouthEast by around 6 per cent. in the new year. That is almost 3 per cent. above the rate of inflation. That suggests a cut in PSO in the Network SouthEast sector of about 10 per cent. None of us who travels by train in the south of England needs reminding that other than the efforts by Mr. Chris Green and his staff—I willingly pay tribute to their efforts, and I am sure that my hon. Friends from north of the border regret Mr. Green's transfer to Network SouthEast because of his efforts in Scotland—the fact is that staffing, station maintenance, quality of service, overcrowding and timekeeping on many lines in that sector are not good enough and regularly are the subject of a barrage of criticism from regular users.

During the most recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission study into London commuter services in 1980, the MMC found that BR had identified five areas where there were opportunities for real pricing—that is, fare increases above the retail price index. The most important was keeping in step with real income improvements. That is exactly what the Government are arguing now, and exactly the message implicit in the Secretary of State's statement on 21 October, that commuters in the south-east can afford to pay more, and should do so. That message might be morally right. It would help the debate if at least the Government, for once, had the courage and honesty to say that that is what they are doing, but they try to conceal their real intentions behind a smokescreen of greater efficiency, so-called productivity and further reductions in both service and staff.

Despite the Government's reaction to the MMC report, fares in the Network SouthEast sector have increased by more than 20 per cent. in real terms since 1979. Again, I hope that the Secretary of State, when he canvasses his commuters on one of Croydon's stations at the next general election, will have the courage to tell them that under his Government fares have increased by that percentage in real terms. Part of the reason is that BR has increased fares significantly above the rate of inflation on lines where substantial investments have taken place—for example, the Bedford-St. Pancras route.

To encompass a cut in PSO of 25 per cent., fares in the south-east sector would have to rise by about 10 per cent. in real terms. In reality, passenger revenue will not be sufficient to meet the shortfall as traffic switches again to the roads, adding to the enormous problems already encountered by commuters who attempt to enter and leave London by road every day. If British Rail cannot make good the cut in PSO through the improved efficiency demanded by the Government — and none of us seriously believes that it can — asset sales or fare increases are the only alternative to line closures.

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman has some familiarity with the railways. Can he say what sort of percentage improvement in efficiency he would like to see? An organisation of that sort is bound to be able to make some improvement in efficiency. What sort of improvement is it reasonable to expect?

Mr. Snape: As the hon. Gentleman says, I have some acquaintance with the railways. I was still working for the railways on the day in 1974 when the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) decided to have a general election. I must confess that there have been times since when I thought I might have to work for the railways again. Efficiency, punctuality, standards of service or anything else cannot be improved by continually reducing the amount of money available. The Secretary of State was slightly lampooned in the newspapers for saying that I would throw money at every problem. As the House heard in an exchange last week, that view does not apply to agriculture.

I hope that the next Labour Government will ensure that Britain's railway system is properly funded. I want to see funds made available to bring about the improvements that the hon. Gentleman's constituents demand in Hampshire. Certainly, the constituents of the right hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr Moore) continually complain about the service. Unless we have the sort of improvements that I have demanded, the flight of commuters from the railways will continue. If one looks

[Mr. Snape]

at a graph covering the period from the 1960s during which we had Governments of both parties, one sees that the number of people commuting by rail into London has dropped dramatically. A further flight from the rail network on to London's roads and the roads in the south of England would be disastrous for the environment and for the future of the rail services that at least the Opposition are seeking to defend.

Freightliner, parcels, Travellers' Fare and Inter-City have been grouped together and given a group financial target. The message is that Inter-City remains in desperate trouble and is £100 million in the red. I understand that negotiations are taking place about standards, but in the past the standards set have proved unreachable. Setting such standards is no way in which to get Inter-City out of its desperate trouble, because unattainable standards are demoralising for management and staff.

British Rail set up a special unit to examine ways of meeting the Government's target to eliminate the need for PSO support by 1987-88 and to achieve a 5 per cent. return on assets by 1988-89. I make a plea and hope that it will be received by the Minister in the right spirit. If standards are unrealistic, not only is the Government's overall view damaged, but it is extremely dangerous for morale in the industry. We are continually accused, as the Minister accused us when he opened the debate, of knocking the railway industry.

I defy the Minister of State to deny that since this Government have been in office there have been cuts in the network, reductions in services, an increase in the number of overcrowded trains, a rejection, for financial reasons, by British Rail of profitable freight traffic and a dramatic reduction in the work force. Those remaining in the industry have been forced to work longer hours. One only has to compare the hours worked in the mid-1980s by railwaymen with those that they worked in the mid-1970s. It gives me no pleasure to say that our forecasts and predictions have, regrettably, come true.

Unless there is a dramatic change of heart by the Government, the decline in standards will continue. Such a decline is not in the best interests of the industry. It is certainly not in the best interests of the Government, who will soon have to fight a general election on their transport policies as well as on their other policies. Most important of all, it is not in the best interests of those who depend on the railway industry either to transport their freight or to carry them to and from work every day.

11.40 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am grateful to have this opportunity to participate in the debate. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and I often travel together on railway journeys, and on many occasions we agree on all matters. However, there is some justification in my hon. Friend the Minister's criticism that he and some of his hon. Friends overdo their criticism of everything and anything that this Government do in connection with the railways. As that criticism so often reflects upon British Rail, he does his constituents, his party and the railways no good by failing from time to time to give credit where credit is due. My hon. Friend the Minister may be slightly surprised to hear me say that. He probably regards me as one of the more severe critics of the Government's railways policy. But that is because, among friends, one can always pick up points of criticism.

I echo my hon. Friend the Minister's point that, during the last few years, this Government's investment in British Rail has been significant. What is being done now has been talked about for years. The east coast main line electrification project is the largest single project for 25 years. Twenty-five years ago we had a Conservative Government. I do not know what Labour Governments have done between that time and this. We had a debate earlier this evening about Manchester. Joining the railway systems to the north and south of Manchester has been dreamed of, talked of and written about for well over 100 years. But that is happening now; the finance has been approved and the project is under construction.

Money is not always the answer to a problem. Can one honestly say that the savings in operating costs on British Airways in the last few years have resulted in the airline being less efficient than it was a few years ago?

As for the south-eastern network and "socially necessary services", this country badly needs more investment. It is amazing that we have had to fight so hard for Manchester airport. I am delighted that at last the scheme is to go ahead. In terms of the national interest, it is scandalous that we even contemplated building an airport, with a railway line to it, yet again in the prosperous south-east when we have had to fight so hard to obtain a railway link for Manchester airport.

As for the Heathrow link, may I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to look seriously at the link from the Great Western railway line at Iver to the South Western railway line at Feltham? Almost all of it would be in tunnel. That link is absolutely essential if we are to maximise railway traffic to and from the airport and to alleviate the appalling traffic jams that are a feature of everyday life now on the M4 motorway. What is more, it will get out of control if terminal 5 is built. When assessing the balance sheet of a rail link to Heathrow, we must take account of the enormous costs of the constant congestion of airport-bound traffic on the motorway, because there is no adequate rail link, which will increase.

I want to concentrate on what I describe as a fair appreciation of the railway in society. We have only to imagine what British cities would be like without a railway system to realise that their absence is a proposition that we cannot contemplate. My critical comments, if they be so, of the Government's latest proposals and the letter that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sent to Sir Robert Reid, will be concentrated on commuter services.

Commuter services are essentially unprofitable. Running a rail service for one hour at each end of the day and empty trains for the rest of the day on tracks that have to be maintained and signalled will self-evidently not lend itself to profitable operation. They are truly the socially essential services. It is not always recognised that, if we insisted that BR ran only its profitable services, it would abolish the commuter services tomorrow. It provides those services because they are essential for our environment.

The more that BR succeeds in bringing people onto the trains for commuter services to London, the more money it will lose. What is the logic, therefore, of applying commercial criteria to reach an objective that we all want when that objective will add to, rather than reduce, the losses involved?

I wish that, when we talk of Network SouthEast and commuter services to London and other cities, we remembered that they will never be profitable and that success could end up costing us more money rather than saving it. Applying commercial criteria to commuter services is unreasonable and unsound.

As for what differentiates between road and rail travel, I shall not weary the House by reading what Sir Robert Reid said in his annual report about safety, but the safety record of our railways is one of which we can be proud. We in Parliament, have for 150 years laid down stringent safety requirements on the railways. Perhaps that is why we expect so much of them. On the roads, however, "only" 5,200 people were killed last year. We were told that that was a good year.

Why do we have headlines and a demand for a private notice question whenever there is a rail accident? There is slaughter on the roads each day, but nobody says anything about it. If passenger-carrying traffic on the roads was forced to abide by the same safety standards that successive Governments have laid down for the railways, British Rail would be turned into one of the world's most profitable organisations overnight.

I do not know why we demand of the railways a signalling system and a given distance between all trains, but impose no similar rules for roads. Why do we accept an almost non-existent level of safety on the roads as compared with the railways? Such demands are exceedingly expensive.

The hire and reward rules for the road passenger transport industry are virtually non-existent when it comes to safety as compared with the rules we lay down for the railways.

Why do we do nothing to prevent coaches on motorways travelling on the outside lane, bullying and shoving people off the road, yet we will not allow a lorryload of bananas to go in that same lane? Are we more concerned about the welfare of bananas than we are about human beings? That is one of the many anomalies which is part of the farce of the history of the comparison between rail and road transport in Britain.

British Rail has to pay for all its track costs. Yet, as the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East rightly said, the passenger transport and freight industry on the roads do no such thing. The bills for road transport are automatically picked by the taxpayer. I could go on indefinitely.

A few weeks ago I tabled a written question about level crossings. Every year, the railway industry has to pay millions of pounds for allowing roads the privilege of crossing its railway tracks. What is the sense of that? Why should the railways always pay these costs? If there is an accident at an automatic level crossing, we do not talk about the idiotic driver who tried to dash across when the red light was flashing and caused an accident; we immediately demand an inquiry to decide whether the equipment is working properly. It is assumed that mechanical failures are automatic on the railways, whereas human failures are non-existent on the roads.

British Rail must pay for all its own police—£30 million a year. When there are accidents or traffic jams on the roads, the police are called and the taxpayer pays.

Tomorrow, the final section of what will be the largest car park in Britain will be opened—the M25. When Sir Robert Reid and I were discussing comparisons between road and rail he asked, partially in jest, what people would say if he said that he did not want to go on paying for the stations—all the rents and rates—and had decided that, as from next week, all trains would be parked at Piccadilly Circus. To say such a thing illustrates that the costs of stations, signalling, track, and the police are all borne by British Rail out of its operating finances yet the taxpayer funds the roads.

The BR annual report for 1985-86, shows that track costs were £456 million, yet all the equivalent track costs on the roads are borne by the taxpayer. Signalling cost £119 million yet we can be sure that the Bus and Coach Council does not pay anything towards traffic lights. Stations cost £239 million and the police cost £30 million. Those four items alone cost British Rail £844 million in the financial year 1985-86. To those costs must be added 40 ancient monuments for which British Rail is responsible, 700 listed buildings, 80 sites of special scientific interest and 600 conservation areas. These are all costs which the railway is called upon to pay. Who can say that such things as ancient monuments are part of running a railway and should be subject to commercial criteria?

No, at the moment, if there is not a fare deal for the customers because there is not a fair deal for the railway.

I pay tribute to the Ministers for sitting here and listening to this as I am sure it is wearying to listen to what I have said so often. The Department of Transport should have a thorough review of the true social comparison to the taxpayer and to the nation of road versus rail. There should be a true and fair comparison between passenger transport for hire and reward on the roads and passenger transport for hire and reward on the railways.

If we do not fund the railways and maintain an efficient railway system, and if we fail to attract customers to it, all that we shall do in the long run is increase pollution, congestion and stagnation. I am sure that no hon. Member wants that.

11.54 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), whose knowledge of and support for the railways I greatly admire. As a boy—I am a bit older than him—I went into Paddington station in 1938, and I remember seeing the banner across the entrance which said, "A square deal for the railways." That was before nationalisation, when the railways were feeling hard done by because of what the Government were doing to them in those days. I still believe that the railways deserve a square deal.

It is late, and I shall not harangue the Government too much about the railways, although I hope that in the new Session they will give us time to debate public transport generally. This is rather a luxury for me, because I am a member of the Select Committee on Transport and only this evening we were questioning representatives of the British Railways Board on the present position of the railways and on their reaction to the Secretary of State's announcement that the public service obligation would be reduced by about £150 million. Sir Robert Reid seems to believe that he can live with it, but I wonder whether that is so.

I hope that the Minister will not accuse me of knocking the railways. I accept that there have been significant improvements in recent years, especially north of London. For that, we should congratulate the management and work force of British Rail. They have done a great job. The staff of the railways are now down to 140,000 and an entire

[Mr. Stephen Ross]

tier of management has disappeared. Indeed, there is a shortage of about 10,000 people. It is difficult to recruit some of the staff needed, especially guards in the London area. Presumably that is due to unsocial hours—at least that was the answer given to us this evening——

Mr. Snape: It is the rotten wages.

Mr. Ross: I accept entirely that low wages are a factor. But stations are more pleasant places to visit, as anyone who goes to Waterloo and Victoria can see, or to be stranded in. It is even more pleasant at Portsmouth harbour station. Trains are slowly becoming cleaner. Station managers turn out to be human beings. I have been trying to find the station manager at Portsmouth for 12 years, but now there is a poster at the station, with his photograph, telling us who he is. He is doing jolly well. They show their faces and they have open days. The public are coming in. Catering has improved dramatically, and some private catering has been introduced. Patronage of the railways is up by 3 per cent.

I agree with the Minister that there is a good story to tell, but I have some fears for the future. There is a risk that the Government will force the railways into over-pricing the fares, which will have the effect of killing the golden goose—the commuters. There is a point at which they will take no more. I can give an illustration of that. There are not many wealthy people on the Isle of Wight —I am certainly not——

Mr. Snape: Oh!

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman should see my bank manager. However, I knew some people who travelled first class to London—I dare say that the Under-Secretary of State will know some of them—but when British Rail withdrew the first-class day return—incidentally, it was not withdrawn on the western region — those people refused to pay £30 for the full first-class return to London, so they travelled second class. I understand that Sir Robert Reid has attracted most of those people back, but if British Rail hikes up the fares yet again, they will not return a second time, but the railways will be forced to do that.

The fares structure on Network SouthEast, especially south of London, will cause many people to ask themselves, "Can we afford to go on paying this?" With the big bang there is a great deal of money around in the City, but when life gets a little more difficult for some of those people, the first thing that they will lose is their first-class travel. Then they will look to coaches, which will be competitive, although they will take a long time to come in because of the congestion in London. They may get up that half hour earlier in the morning and come in by car. That cannot make any sense.

Secondly, the rolling stock south of London leaves much to be desired. The Minister said that there would be new rolling stock on the Southampton-Weymouth line, and it is about time. The other day I travelled from Southampton on an eight-coach train, and that is the first time that I have seen that. That is presumably due to lack of rolling stock, and it is leading to overcrowding. We are constantly getting that on the Portsmouth line, and we are not getting any new stock on that line. I wrote to Chris Green the other day, saying that it was unfair to expect people to pay such high fares and travel strap-hanging all the way from Havant to London, which happens all the time.

Moreover, if one travels from some of the London stations, such as Charing Cross or Cannon Street, one still has to use the old-type coaches with no corridor. Women in particular do not feel easy travelling in such coaches, and I do not blame them. Often, they run late at night. The cuts will mean a delay in replacing some of that rolling stock, and that point must be put to the Minister.

Some excellent schemes, such as Capitalcard, have been introduced, and I understand that there will now be a network card, which have helped to increase the number of travelling public. I hope that such schemes are here to stay and there will not be too much of a hike-up in the cost of them. It is made clear in the Secretary of State's letter to Sir Robert Reid that the cuts may lead to the closure of some branch lines, when we should be considering reopening some freight lines. I am thinking in particular of the Oxford to Bletchley line, on which there have been one or two trial trains. I am sure that that would work out. One could name others.

Sir Robert Reid told us in evidence that he cannot make Inter-City profitable by 1989 and that he will have to borrow to make up the shortage. That is too exacting a restriction to put on BR at this time.

Because of the lengthy procedure of closure BR sometimes thinks again, as in the case of Marylebone, which it realised it could not shut. The plans to close it were withdrawn because the numbers of passengers were increasing, and the Underground could not take them. I hope that we shall see Marylebone develop so that there will be more and better services, particularly to the Wembley area.

We cannot press the Minister for a decision on the Settle to Carlisle line, but we hope that he will make the right decision, particularly with a general election coming up, and the fact that quite a number of Tory seats are in that part of the world. I travelled on the line in early October and the train was crowded, because at long last BR has had the sense to promote and develop the line, with the permission of local authorities, so that small stations can be opened. It is making a profit, but BR still wants to shut it. I find that unbelievably stupid.

This is an overcrowded country, where the traffic on our roads continues to increase dramatically and a vast and expensive ring road is quickly choked. I have in mind the M25, to which the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) referred. Traffic congestion is a fact of life in almost every town of any size, including Newport, Isle of Wight, where there are four or five-mile queues in the summer to get into the town along its one or two approach roads. Any restriction on investment in the railways makes no sense.

Mr. David Mitchell: Where is the hon. Gentleman getting the idea from that there are any restrictions on investment in the railways? I have made it clear on a number of occasions that I welcome proposals from BR for viable and good investment. The hon. Gentleman is misleading himself if he believes that we are proposing cuts in investment.

Mr. Ross: I am the first to congratulate the Government on the improvement in the capital programmes which they have initiated in the past couple of years on, for example, the east coast main line, the

Hastings line and the Bournemouth-Weymouth line, but the board has to pay the interest. At the end of the day, does it not come back to the total amount that British Rail has to spend? I assume that it does. The board surely has to look at its finances before it sets up schemes. It must know what the improvements will cost.

I very much welcome what has happened. I am not knocking it, but surely any restriction must be detrimental to the movement of people. I agree with the Government that we want an efficient, value-for-money rail network, but if it is to succeed it must be able to price its services within the means of the average person. I say to the Government, "Please beware. Do not press your demands too far. In recent years the railways have responded nobly, but they need a carrot or two to help them to maintain that momentum."

12.5 am

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Minister of State and to last week's statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I listened with particular interest to the references to Network SouthEast and the likelihood of fare increases as a result of my right hon. Friend's announcement. For reasons which I understand, neither Minister was prepared to be specific, but clearly some of the comments about 25 per cent. increases were gross exaggerations. There is no question of there being such increases. However, I am suspicious about possible fare increases in Network SouthEast above the rate of inflation. Any such increases would be less than popular in my commuter constituency. I put it no higher than that. I cannot quarrel, however, with the aim of reducing the substantial taxpayers' subsidy of these services.

Any increase would be easier to bear if it were matched by a better service. I was pleased to see several references to that in the letter sent by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the chairman of British Rail. The letter stated:

"You and your Board need to offer your customers an efficient railway providing good value for money."

Well said. My right hon. Friend referred to the need

"to improve the service to the customer",

and to

"improvements in quality of service".

He said:

"I particularly welcome the new efforts to ensure that the London commuter services are reliable, attractive and punctual."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. 772-3.]

Frankly, my right hon. Friend and, especially, the chairman of British Rail have some way to go in each respect.

As for attractiveness, the new and refurbished rolling stock and the new livery are attractive, but, alas, they seem to make the older stock appear even dirtier. Some carriages are filthy, externally and internally. Of course, the internal mess is caused not by British Rail but by the customers. I appreciate BR's difficulties in cleaning carriages when there is a quick turn-round at the terminals. Nevertheless, if there are to be higher fares, passengers should not have to try several carriages before finding one free from rubbish and graffiti.

In recent years, there has been an improvement in punctuality, but there are still far too many delays. My hon. Friend the Minister cited 90 per cent. as a reasonable target but if 90 per cent. of services are on time, that is an admission that 10 per cent. of services are more than five minutes late; and that is on some runs of only 30 or 40 minutes. That is not good enough.

Mr. Adley: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Sims: Time is very limited and other hon. Members wish to speak. I hope that my hon. Friend does not mind if I do not give way.

The commuter services in my area simply are not good enough. There are far too many cancellations inside and outside the rush hours. In a constituency such as mine—a commuter area—business and social life are based upon the railway. People catch the 8.45 to be in the office by 9.30. If they find it cancelled and have 15 minutes to wait, it is, to put it no higher, very frustrating. Will they have to catch an earlier train the next day in case the train that they rely on does not run? That is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs.

If trains are cancelled outside the rush hour, that can mean a wait of half an hour or more and people will be late for their appointments. I am speaking not from hearsay but from my own experience. It is many years now since my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I commuted together on the same train. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then. But I still commute daily, except, perhaps I should add, on days when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House seeks to put on business of this character at this hour. However, I must avoid the temptation of dealing with some of the work being done by the Select Committee on Procedure on such issues.

Why must we have such cancellations on commuter services? The timetables have been carefully worked out. Those who organise things know exactly what services and staff are required. After all these years, the excuse of staff shortages is beginning to wear rather thin.

The letter to which I referred talked about the London commuter services being reliable, attractive and punctual, but if Network SouthEast is to put up fares over and above the rate of inflation, my constituents and I will expect those words to be translated into deeds.

12.11 am

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): It has been interesting to hear the Minister's exposition on expenditure this evening, but I notice that he has not mentioned the Midland line, which runs from St. Pancras to Sheffield. I hope that that will be given some consideration in any BR expenditure.

My main reason for intervening this evening is to ask the Minister whether serious consideration is now being given to the rail network, in particular for freight, with regard to the Channel tunnel. In the north of England we were concerned about the development of the Channel tunnel, but we are now viewing it positively.

We are hoping that the Government will look favourably on some type of inland customs clearance. I am talking, in particular, of Sheffield. Within the rail infrastructure we now have a fairly dormant three-and-a-half mile stretch alongside the M1 called the Tinsley area which is a major freight terminal, probably one of the most modern in the 1960s, but which, unfortunately, never realised its potential.

If BR looks positively to the future, that freight yard now has potential. The local authority, along with the chamber of commerce, the trade unions and other

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

interested parties, have commissioned a survey to look at the feasibility of developing an inland customs clearance, not just because of that freight terminal, but because of all the infrastructure, both road and rail, which lead to and from that area.

I hope that during the next three years, when BR is being developed, the Minister will prevail on it to look at the difference between the north and south in terms of economic development. I go further and say that, unless that type of development takes place with the advent of the Channel tunnel, many industrialists say that they will not be able to afford to invest in the south-east because it is so expensive and therefore their port of call may be northern France. Therefore, it is now important to have the type of rail infrastructure that many of the areas in the north are talking about which can be brought into play.

We must involve not just BR but the Department of Transport and Her Majesty's customs as well. They must be co-ordinated and the idea treated sympathetically. If that is done, I am fairly convinced that there can be some regeneration of the industrial north by effectively bringing the Channel tunnel entrance into the centre of south Yorkshire in the way that I have described. I hope that the Minister's reply will be favourable. I am asking not for a definitive answer, but for at least some words of encouragement this evening.

12.14 am

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Minister spoke of prejudiced critics. I hope that he will forgive my lack of modesty if I say that I like to see myself as a fair and dispassionate critic. I am also a keen supporter of the railway system both north and south of the border.

I am a regular passenger on the Glasgow central to Euston service, which has approximately eight trains a day. I am happy to say that I much prefer that mode of transport to the Glasgow to Heathrow shuttle. It is much more civilised to travel down from Scotland by train, and it gives me a chance to read as well. However, there are problems with the service north and south of the border. When will the Sprinters and Pacers that the Minister mentioned come to ScotRail, and in particular, to the west of Scotland? In the west of Scotland it is feared that passengers may have to travel to London by way of the fair city of Edinburgh. That is not a complaint against Edinburgh, but the Glasgow-to-Euston service is very important to people.

The Minister's reply to my earlier intervention was, to say the least, unsatisfactory. It was staggering that he should refer to alternative routes. Glasgow is important in its own right, as are the towns that surround it. The Minister also referred to the improvements made to the decor of, and services in, our railway stations. But stations in my constituency leave much to be desired. For example, it is difficult for the elderly, blind, and disabled, or for young mothers with children to get into the Port Glasgow station. The provision of lavatories and waiting rooms in the stations in my constituency is a disgrace, particularly at Greenock central station.

I feel deeply sorry for passengers and staff on ScotRail, who travel to and from stations in my constituency.

As the Minister rightly emphasised, passenger safety is an important issue. Recently, I had to protest to the general manager of ScotRail about near-accidents involving young mothers with children in prams or baby carriages, who have been trapped between automatically closing doors. That has happened several times in my constituency, and there is a danger that there will be a serious accident. One of the factors involved is the absence of guards on those trains.

I have great faith in Mr. Cornell, the general manager of ScotRail, and his employees. I also had great faith in his predecessor, Mr. Green, who is now, I believe, in this part of the world. Despite all the problems that bedevil those people, they attempt to provide a first-class service with very limited resources. North of the border the rolling-stock is, with the exception of the two Inter-City services, dilapidated. That is a disgrace and it harms our tourist industry. Foreigners travelling to Inverness, Aberdeen or Perth have to travel on pretty shabby rolling stock. Both domestic and foreign passengers deserve a much better service. The same is true of the staff of ScotRail, who are unfailingly courteous and helpful to their passengers. I am sorry that they do not receive the service that they deserve from the Government. British Rail and ScotRail are underfunded compared with railways in many other European countries. I regret that deeply.

I bring the Minister back to the important question of the Glasgow-Euston service. The passengers who use that service deserve a straightforward answer about the press speculation surrounding its continuance.

12.20 am

Mr. David Mitchell: We have had an interesting debate. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) said that if British Rail cannot meet the quality objectives now, how can it be expected to do so with a reduction in the PSO. He was referring to Network SouthEast. The PSO reduction for Network SouthEast and provincial is based on a reduction of 4 per cent. over three years. There is hardly a business in the land which cannot improve its efficiency by 4 per cent. over three years. The chairman of British Rail has accepted it as a financial target consistent with achieving the quality targets.

The hon. Gentleman referred to criticism about overcrowding. On some routes the peak capacity does not allow for sufficient numbers of trains to be squeezed in to enable people to be carried without overcrowding. On certain routes the numbers of people who want to be carried are greater than can be provided with seats because we cannot squeeze in extra trains in the peak hours. It is possible at other times, but not at peak hours. For that reason there will be some standing in excess of British Rail's target.

The hon. Gentleman asserted that British Rail had rejected profitable freight traffic. That is not true. If he has an example of that I hope that he will write to me about it, because I should like to take it up with the board. He then asserted that there was a flight of passengers from commuter trains. That is a flight of the hon. Gentleman's imagination, because passenger demand has been increasing on the commuter network.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) referred rightly to British Rail's substantial progress and to the effects of investment approval by the Government for the east coast main line—the biggest investment project for 25 years—and for the Windsor

link, a 100-year-old dream coming true. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for recognising these massive investment trends.

My hon. Friend asked me about the Heathrow links. We are appraising the various alternatives and we shall return to that subject. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for referring to the British Transport police, who are rarely referred to in the House. Quietly, efficiently and competently, they do a tremendous job on behalf of the travelling public. My hon. Friend suggested that rail users paid for their track costs, whereas road users do not. In taxation and fuel duty, road users do pay for their track costs.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) constructively asked a number of questions and suggested that fares were likely to go up so much that people would stop using the trains. Our expectation is that the pattern of fare increases in the next three years will not be very different from that over the past three years, and the pattern has not had the effect that the hon. Gentleman fears.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chiselhurst (Mr. Sims) talked about train washing, cleanliness within trains and train cancellations. On Network SouthEast the target is that each train is washed every 24 hours. That target has not been achieved, but so far this year there has been an increase from 70 per cent. of trains being washed every day to 88 per cent. That is progress in the right direction, and that should be recognised. Four-weekly interior cleaning has increased from 71 to 77 per cent. Improvements are clearly discernible for those who are regular users.

I agree with my hon. Friend that train cancellations are one of the most exasperating events that can befall a commuter, and we must ensure that we do everything that we can to help British Rail improve on that score. Its target for Network SouthEast is 98·5 per cent. of all trains running. The latest figures that I have tell me that 98·3 per cent. has been achieved. That is below the figure that should apply, but British Rail is seeking to improve on that.

One of the difficulties lies with guards. Where there are driver-only operations, there is a far greater standard of reliability. Instead of waiting for two people to turn up a service can be provided with only the driver. Progress has been made, but I accept that a great deal more has to be done.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) talked about the St. Pancras-Sheffield service. Inter-city trains have been introduced and the service has been made substantially faster. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give credit to British Rail for what has been achieved. I agree with him about the desirability of a network of inland clearance depots that are linked to the Channel tunnel. That is a way in which British Rail can secure for the north of England substantial advantages in being able to compete successfully for exporters delivering their exports to the continental markets and——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion. MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft British Railways Board (Increase of Compensation Limit) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

Crime Prevention

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

12.27 am

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I have the opportunity to raise the problems of crime prevention and the need to warn citizens not to admit strangers into their homes without full identification. At the same time I refer to the problems of crime which are growing throughout the country, not least in Leicester and Leicestershire, and the need to combat crime by adding to the resources of police forces and providing full information to and obtaining full information from the public.

The Government's failure to deal with crime is best illustrated by figures that show that there has been a 55 per cent. increase in crime in Leicestershire since the Government came to power. This means that one reported crime is committed every 11 minutes. Of these crimes, 2,105 are crimes of violence against the person, which have also increased by 55 per cent. since 1978 and are now taking place once every four hours. There were 10,042 burglaries in 1985, an increase of 62 per cent. They are taking place now at the rate of one every 52 minutes. Some of the nastiest, meanest, shabbiest and most disgraceful crimes are those committed against the elderly in their own homes.

I have a sheaf of cuttings from the *Leicester Mercury* about offences against the elderly. I pay tribute to the *Leicester Mercury* for its persistence and the accuracy of its reporting in this sphere, and for the help which it has kindly given me in the preparation of material for the debate. I shall quote a few of the cases, all typical. One story reads:

"Police were yesterday called to the home of an 81-year-old Leicester woman who had been living in silence and fear since she was assaulted and robbed a week ago. The woman, who lives alone, was attacked last Wednesday when she opened her door to a youth."

Another story headed, "Woman, 72, conned" reads:

"Two teenage tricksters conned their way into the home of a 72-year-old Braunstone woman and stole £70. The couple called at the woman's home in Medwell Road posing as officials from the local Water Authority."

Next:

"A con man tricked his way into the home of an 86-year-old Leicester woman and stole £85 last night."

An item headed "Theft" reads:

"At 5 pm in Doncaster Road on Wednesday—it was his third attempt in 24 hours—a man tricked his way into the home of an 82-year-old woman and 10 minutes later repeated the trick on an 86-year-old woman."

Another headline:

"Cruel thief cons widow—for £30."

The story reads:

"A thief conned an 87-year-old Braunstone widow . . . produced City Council identification and claimed he was making a New Year check of her lighting."

Yet another story:

"Conmen preying on pensioners stole more than £400 in five separate incidents."

So the stories go on. "Man attacked for £74" reads a headline, and others say,

"Robber threatens woman in own home"

and

"Youth robs woman, 72, of £100".

In every case there is the nastiness and evil of people making attacks on the elderly, not merely in their own

[Mr. Greville Janner]

homes so as to take money from them at the time, but putting them in a state of fear from which many of them do not recover.

"Man plundered the old gets five years jail"

states a headline, and the story reads:

"A 23-year-old was convicted of tricking his way into pensioners' homes."

Then there are stories of charity frauds, with people posing as charity collectors. One story tells of a con man who tricked a woman by convincing her that he had come to mend the roof, and he stole £65. An article tells of the way in which the Severn-Trent water authority warned householders to guard against con men posing as officials.

"Tricksters steals £500 from man, 78"

declares another headline, and the story reads:

"Hinckley police are investigating two reports of bogus callers preying on old people."

Another headline declares:

"Elderly fall prey to teen con gang."

I have pages of cuttings of the same wickedness and evil, all committed in recent months and all in the city part of which I am privileged to represent.

This morning I called on a constituent, a man in his early forties but looking much older. He is disabled, suffering from epilepsy. Some time ago his wife answered a knock on the door to see a neighbour standing there, and immediately two young men rushed in and beat her up. The man, because of his disability, could not help to rescue her. The men raided the house in search of money, but there was none. They were caught and convicted.

How can we deal with this kind of filthy crime? We could start by increasing the resources available to the police. I pay tribute to the work of community policemen throughout the country, by policemen on the beat to whom the elderly and others can turn. We have many complaints against the police and complaints about the way in which complaints are dealt with by police forces. Like all other groups of people, there are good and bad among them. But the good are very good and they should be strengthened.

At a time when crime has increased so much, it is wrong that police forces should still be starved of the resources they need. The Government rightly say that they are recruiting more policemen, but under Conservative rule the crime rate has increased so greatly that those increases are insufficient.

When Leicester police ask for more men and women to be on the beat and the request is turned down, we must all worry. I pay my respects to Mr. Goodson, the previous chief constable of Leicestershire, for the work he did, and I regret that he did not receive the resources that he needed. I pay tribute to our new chief constable, Mr. Michael Hirst, and I hope that when he asks for help he will receive it, because it will not be for himself but for the people who live in the city and who are afraid to go out at night.

It will be for the people who are afraid even in what should be the safety of their own homes, their castles—the places where they should feel secure, but they are not. We should provide the resources that the police need, and they should be enabled to help citizens to live in the shelter of their own homes and cities without fear.

Unfortunately, that is not happening, and nor would it be enough. In addition, it is vital that people should be warned not to allow strangers into their home without full and proper identification. Even with identification, they may still run into trouble. If there is any doubt, people should be helped and encouraged to inquire before anyone is allowed into their home.

One of the tragedies which have occurred under this Government is the removal of resources in servicing elderly people—for example, by providing them with telephones so they can get through to others. I understand that Age Concern is promoting a number of schemes to help elderly people to make their houses burglar-proof. It is providing advice for old-age pensioners, crime alert cards and cards which advise on safe ways to deal with callers which can be attached to the inside of doors. Public information campaigns are run not only by Age Concern, which is a wonderful organisation that deserves the support of all hon. Members, but by the Leicester city council.

There is a lack of overall co-ordination from the centre. There are no national policies. Some areas have no policy at all. Many districts could take advice from what has been learnt in other areas. I call on the Government to produce an overall plan for coping with the spread of crime, of attacks, of violence and of theft from people in their own homes, and not to rely, as they have done too much, on the voluntary effort of organisations of which Age Concern is only one.

There is room for help by organisations such as the Leicester Victims of Crime organisation, which is run by Mr. Maurice Jones and his colleagues, which do their best to give elderly people a greater perception of danger, leading to proper care and not merely to greater fear. Elderly people should have the advantage of advanced technology, such as emergency telephone systems and apparatus that can be hung around their necks, for example, enabling them to give warnings of dangers which they fear to others.

It is not enough simply to praise and to prompt. There is a profound need for action. There are not enough statistics. We do not know, for example, how many attacks are made by people on others in their homes. We do not have the statistics because there is no breakdown. I call on the Government to produce such figures. I understand that the Home Office expenditure on crime prevention publicity this year will total about £2·5 million. The fact that it is failing is shown all too clearly by the increases in crime. I appreciate that part of that is due not to the police, policing or crime prevention publicity but simply to the enormous miseries of boredom created by unemployment, young people not having adequate facilities and the general malaise of the disadvantaged which afflicts our country.

Dealing specifically with the problem that is before the House, I hope that in his answer the Minister will give the country some hope of positive steps designed to help people to cope, and that he will pay heed to the recommendations made by constabularies such as Leicestershire for more resources when they are needed. Perhaps we shall cease to be afflicted by the constant reports of mean, nasty, scurrilous and evil tricking of elderly people in their own homes. Perhaps some of the very small minority of people who commit such a crime will think how they would feel if the behaviour that they direct against others were inflicted on them when they get old, so that they may take heed of those miseries and avoid them for the future.

It is a very sad world in which we have to ask the House and the Government to take note of such a crime so late at night, but if note is taken, and if the Government take the action that is needed, perhaps the morning will be happier for many elderly people than it will be tomorrow, and not so many will be attacked during a long and unhappy night.

12.41 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Much as I happen to like the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), I have to say that his speech tonight has displayed a basic ignorance of some of the essential facts, which I find rather alarming, especially as it comes from an hon. and learned Gentleman who has a position of some distinction in his party. During his speech, he used several of the fairly standard phrases that we hear from Opposition Benches. He said that the Government have failed to deal with crime.

Mr. Janner: True.

Mr. Hogg: We shall come to that in a moment.

The hon. and learned Gentleman said that the Government should start to increase the resources available to the police, and the premise that underlay his comments was that the Government had somehow failed——

Mr. Janner: They have.

Mr. Hogg: They have not. His premise was that the Government had somehow failed to honour their pledge to the community on law and order. As I said, that demonstrates an ignorance of the facts that I find somewhat alarming.

Therefore, before I refer to the hon. and learned Gentleman's specific comments, I shall tell him something about the basic facts. Let us begin with expenditure. The Government are now spending over 38 per cent. more in real terms than in 1979. The manpower available to the police has increased by around 15,000 men over 1979, around 10,000 more police officers, the balance being civilians. So, pausing for a moment, what we have seen is an increase in expenditure of around 38 per cent. in real terms since 1979, more than any other increase in any other spending budget. That is a remarkable increase in dedication of resources. It has to be taken into account with the other demands on resources, because the hon. and learned Gentleman would be the first to say, "More teachers." He would be the first to say, "More doctors." He would be the first to say, "More dentists," and so on and so forth. Spending on law and order, vital as it is, has to be weighed in a series of priorities as between spending Departments. There is no doubt that spending on law and order has increased much more dramatically than in any other area. That is a fact from which the hon. and learned Gentleman cannot depart. He would like to concentrate rather more resources on the giving of advice, and here I am inclined to agree with him because crime prevention is one of the most promising areas in which to seek to combat crime.

Crimes of violence attract the greatest publicity, but in reality crimes against property are by far the most numerous. Some 95 per cent. of all crime is crime against property and of this figure around 13 per cent. constitutes burglary of residential property. One can express these percentages in figures. In 1985, nearly 460,000 burglaries were recorded by the police. The best view is that something like the same number go unrecorded. We are talking about a large number of offences against residential property. The interesting thing about this is that a large number of these offences are essentially opportunist.

From an analysis of the figures it seems that about 25 per cent. of burglaries are effected without forced entry of the premises. That tells us that to a considerable extent these are opportunist crimes. People leave windows ajar or doors unlocked or leave keys in locks and somebody comes along and takes advantage of the situation. Opportunist crimes are precisely the type of offences against which householders can guard. It is therefore an area in which Government and institutions of society can and should give positive advice. That is precisely what the Government are seeking to do, because we have organised and concerted a coherent crime prevention programme. The first instrument of this programme is necessarily publicity. We must mount and maintain a publicity campaign designed to warn and advise.

Publicity campaigns can raise the level of public awareness and can give good and practical advice. In the current year we will spend approximately £2·5 million on crime prevention publicity. The most noticeable aspect of that is the magpie campaign. It is directed primarily against burglary and auto crime. It has covered the north of England, the midlands, London and the home counties. It has comprised, as was necessary, a television advertising campaign backed by local press articles, posters and over 11 million leaflets. It was perhaps an object lesson in the kind of campaign that Governments can run. It alerted the public, was simple to understand and gave clear and unequivocal advice.

Inevitably, the Government's activity in this area must go far beyond mere advertising and we do much more than that. At the heart of the Government's programme of crime prevention is the standing conference, which, as the hon. and learned Gentleman will know, has set up a number of working parties which will investigate, report on and advise upon various aspects of criminal behaviour. I know that the hon. and learned Gentleman will be pleased to know that the working party group on residential burglary which is chaired by one of our colleagues, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) is due to report in the middle of November.

My view — it is probably the hon. and learned Gentleman's view, too—is that if crime prevention is to be successful, it has to be local; it has to identify itself with the area with which it is concerned. Therefore, the Government are placing enormous emphasis upon crime prevention panels and neighbourhood watch schemes. The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that Leicester has had very good experience of both. I congratulate the crime prevention panel in Leicester upon having organised the concert that was held in December 1985 in the De Montfort hall. About 2,500 elderly people gathered at that concert, where they were reminded of a whole variety of crime prevention methods. It was a considerable success.

The neighbourhood watch schemes have also proved remarkably successful. In the hon. and learned Gentleman's own county, there are about 40 neighbourhood watch schemes. Crime prevention panels and neighbourhood watch schemes provide a framework and

[Mr. Hogg]

a mechanism whereby we can give advice, help and guidance. But we can do more than that. We are also making use of the community programme. The hon. and learned Gentleman will know what the Government have in mind. Very substantial sums of money are already dedicated to the community programme. By this method the long-term unemployed can be involved in the important task of assisting those who are most vulnerable in society to make their homes more secure and at the same time giving them reassurance.

I shall give two examples. The hon. and learned Gentleman will probably know both. Since 1983, Age Concern has organised a project within the community programme agency in Avon, which involves 1,200 people. They are involved in the task of protecting property, especially the property of the aged. Property has been marked and advice and reassurance have been given. In the hon. and learned Gentleman's own city of Leicester there is a similar pattern. For many years, Age Concern in Leicester has been offering advice to elderly people on crime prevention. In recent years, it has established a community-funded programme to fit locks and other security devices to the homes of the elderly and to repair damage caused to the property of the elderly through burglary.

The Government have a coherent crime prevention programme. Of course we place great emphasis on giving advice. We use the neighbourhood watch schemes, advertising and crime prevention. But we go further than that. Through the medium of the community programme, we are providing practical help for those who need it most —the elderly and the vulnerable.

It is inevitable that I have referred largely to the work done by the Government through the agency of Government-sponsored organisations. However, many other groups and organisations are involved in precisely the kind of ventures that have been commended to us by the hon. and learned Gentleman. Sometimes they are voluntary organisations; sometimes they are commercial organisations; and sometimes they are specialist organisations.

I pay tribute to Help the Aged. Last month it published a pamphlet entitled "Be Safe." The elderly were given advice about the kind of measures that they should take to protect themselves and their property. Sometimes it can be done by Government. The hon. and learned Gentleman will probably know of the publication entitled "Knock, Knock, Who's There?" It is designed to warn the elderly about the dangers of con men, tricksters and bogus officials—precisely the kind of individuals to which the hon. and learned Gentleman referred. He might know rather a lot about that publication as, following a spate of incidents in Leicester involving confidence men and tricksters, about 100,000 copies of the leaflets were handed out through the good offices of the social services department, for which I am extremely grateful.

There are the more sophisticated projects such as the "Stop Thief" video produced by the Prudential and the home security video to be produced by the Halifax building society. Examples can be piled one on the other.

Much crime, especially crime against property, is avoidable. Much of the anxiety experienced by the elderly can be lessened. The hon. and learned Member is quite right to emphasise the need for advice, guidance and assistance. The Government have that precisely in mind. That is why we have mounted, conducted and orchestrated the most coherent crime prevention programme contemplated by any Government. The hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong when he tries to pretend that the Government have not dedicated resources to the police and law and order. No previous Government have increased spending on the police as much as we.

Mr. Janner: And you have failed.

Mr. Hogg: No, we have not failed. We must ask ourselves why crime has increased, and I will give the hon. and learned Member one of the reasons. Many of his friends and colleagues—but not him—have spent far too much time here and elsewhere undermining the moral authority of the state and the moral basis of society. If people go about chipping away at the moral basis of society and trying to pretend that people have entitlement——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at three minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 29 October 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREAT YARMOUTH OUTER HARBOUR BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING) BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the County of South Glamorgan (Taff Crossing) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be ordered to be read the third time;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords, and their concurrence desired thereto.

ESSEX BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Essex Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office no later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

MID GLAMORGAN COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Mid Glamorgan County Council Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave, except as provided by these Orders, to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a dclaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the suspension of other proceedings on the Bill, Standing Order 171A(1) shall apply to the presenting of petitions against the Bill brought from the Lords in the present Session and only Petitions presented under this Order shall be received as Petitions presented under Standing order 171A(1);

Ordered,

That any Petitions presented under the foregoing Order shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Plymouth City Council Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office no later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That the Petition relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stands referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the York City Council Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave, except as provided by these Orders, to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the suspension of other proceedings on the Bill, Standing Order 171A(1) shall apply to the presenting of Petitions against the Bill brought from the Lords in the present Session and only petitions presented under this Order shall be received as Petitions presented under Standing Order 171A(1);

Ordered,

That any Petitions presented under the foregoing Order shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

1. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Economic Community Council will next discuss measures against South Africa.

2. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of European Economic Community measures in relation to the ending of apartheid in South Africa.

5. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Economic Community under his Presidency will next consider the effectiveness of the measurs it has taken against South Africa.

6. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he intends to take as President of the European Economic Community Council to seek to end apartheid in South Africa.

9. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further European Economic Community measures have been taken against South Africa since the Commonwealth Ministers' meeting in August.

12. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Economic Community Council will next discuss measures to end apartheid in South Africa.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Foreign Ministers of the Twelve discussed South Africa on 15 and 16 September and again on 27 October. They will continue to do so regularly. They agreed on 16 September a package of further measures designed to send a strong signal to the South African Government on the urgent need for fundamental change.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Foreign Secretary take a firmer and more insistent position, not least in regard to the effective exclusion of Namibia and several significant

products from the sanctions arrangements? Does not the present situation suggest that the sanctions policies pursued by Britain and western Europe will appear to be merely a rhetorical exercise which, without strict monitoring, could bring the worst possible consequences?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The measures adopted on 16 September do not apply to Namibia, because all but one member of the Twelve consider Namibia raises a separate problem which requires a different approach. The measures were agreed after a great deal of discussion among members of the Twelve and represent a considered and concerted package designed to achieve the results intended.

Mr. Eastham: Reflecting on the Foreign Office's disappointment at the reaction of the EEC Ministers on the issue of Syria, is it not understandable that the EEC Ministers are disappointed with the representations made by Her Majesty's Government on the question of South Africa? Is the Foreign Secretary aware of the overwhelming feeling of the people of Britain, who are absolutely opposed to apartheid in South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am totally aware of the overwhelming opinion of the people of Britain and of the European Community, condemning apartheid and requiring it to be replaced as soon as possible. On that point there is no difference in any part of the House. On the matter of representations by the United Kingdom, I think that my colleagues in the European Community felt that the mission that we undertook towards southern Africa in July represented a very effective presentation of the case upon which the people of Europe are agreed.

Mr. Barnett: Does the Foreign Secretary recognise that an increasingly serious situation is developing in southern Africa, involving increasing degrees of disorder, with the tragic death of Samora Machel? Does he not feel that he should now respond to the call made recently by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth for an international brigade to defend the front-line states against intrusion from South Africa? Whey does he not give a lead of that kind in the European Community?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I should like to differentiate between the one bad point and the other good points made by the hon. Gentleman. I do not think that it would be sensible or fruitful for the European Community or anyone else to begin thinking about mobilising an international brigade in these circumstances.

The hon. Gentleman was right to draw attention to the increasing gravity of the situation in South Africa. The death of President Machel, however it was caused, is undoubetedly a matter of the utmost regret in all parts of the House. There is certainly mounting tension in South Africa and it is of the utmost importance for the South African Government to summon up the courage to make the leap of imagination necessary to call together leaders of the African people with a view to replacing apartheid as soon as possible. There is no doubt about that, but I do not think that it would be right to follow the hon. Gentleman in the other part of his question.

Mr. George Gardiner: When my right hon. and learned Friend next has discussions with his Community colleagues, will he stress to them how utterly counter-productive sanctions and the threat of sanctions are to the reform process in South Africa? Furthermore, will he explain to them that constructive discussions between the leaders of all groups to reach an acceptable settlement are far more likely to succeed in the context of an expanding economy than in one in which blacks and Cape coloureds are being thrown out of work?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have often made plain our view that general economic sanctions should not be seen as an end in themselves and that we do not regard them as an effective way of bringing an end to apartheid. On the other hand, we equally join our Community partners in underlining the imperative importance of discussions, such as my hon. Friend urges, between the South African Government, the leaders of the black Africans in South Africa set free from imprisonment, and the political parties set free from bans which prevent them from operating. I agree with my hon. Friend, however, that there is no sense in punishing ordinary people here and in South Africa by the imposition of general economic sanctions.

Mr. Ashby: When discussing South Africa with his colleagues, will my right hon. and learned Friend discuss the question of Bophuthatswana and suggest that its position be reconsidered, as it is a multi-racial state which has had a large measure of independence for some 10 years? If the independence of Bophuthatswana is not to be considered, will he consider with his colleagues additional help and aid to that country to improve education and similar facilities within its boundaries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that my hon. Friend has recently visited Bophuthatswana, but I must tell him and other hon. Friends who visited it that, with the best will in the world, it is not possible to regard Bophuthatswana or any of the other so-called independent homelands as having the features of independent states. Our position on Bophuthatswana, as on the other so-called independent homelands, is quite clear.

Mr. Beith: Why does the Foreign Secretary not discuus with EEC Ministers new measures which would give a clearer signal to South Africa, such as ban on direct air flights from Europe to South Africa, which could help the front-line states if they then took the traffic?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Because we do not take the same view about the effectiveness of that measure as the hon. Gentleman and because Community Foreign Ministers have spent many hours of many days of many months arriving at the agreement of September 15 and 16. I have an obligation, as President of the Council of Ministers, to seek a further agreement on the outstanding measure. I have sought consensus on that without success. That is as far as the matter can go.

Mr. Colvin: Following the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that as Britain was responsible for dividing the land of the Tswana people into two at the turn of the century we have a moral obligation to assist its reunification? Does he agree that recognition of the state of Bophuthatswana would be a logical first step towards that very laudable aim?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the legitimate interest that my hon. Friend takes in Bophuthatswana and recognise that there are certain features of it which he and other hon. Friends find it possible to commend. If I remember correctly, however, Bophuthatswana is divided between seven widely scattered chunks——

Mr. Colvin: Now only six.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: So be it — six. It represents a widely scattered fragmentation of the jigsaw board across what we all used to know as South Africa. It is for that reason, among others, that it has not been recognised as an independent homeland, whatever the efforts made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall that, in a recent exchange with my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), he was asked why Namibia was excluded from the EEC policy decision in respect of South Africa? The Foreign Secretary gave no answer. Can he correct the omission today?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I answered the question a moment ago. With one exception, our European Community partners do not regard Namibia as appropriate for inclusion in the same treatment as South Africa.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most damaging things that has happened recently to the ending of apartheid, and sympathy for that end, was the International Red Cross decision to throw South Africa out of an organisation which is meant to be about healing world wide, whether enemy or ally? Will my right hon. and learned Friend make his views clear and say that that is a most reprehensible action from what used to be a wonderful organisation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not know what effect that decision will have on the prospects for securing an end to apartheid in South Africa, but it must be a matter for regret that the normal pattern of universality of the International Red Cross should have been varied in that way. It is equally a matter of regret that it should have led to the response that it received. One of the outstanding features of the International Red Cross for a long time has been its capacity to maintain its presence everywhere, regardless of politics and local circumstances.

Mr. Faulds: If it is argued that sanctions are unacceptable and ineffective against South Africa, why should they have been deemed necessary against Argentina and now against Syria?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There are three different situations there and I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman, with his perceptiveness, does not acknowledge that. With Argentina there was armed conflict, at the conclusion of which we withdrew the sanctions that we had in place. Argentina has still not withdrawn the sanctions that she has had in place. As for Syria, there has been state abuse of diplomatic immunity and there has been state direction of terrorism. The entire House supported the measures that we took in that respect on Friday. As for South Africa, the problem is one of immense complexity and long standing. It is a matter on which the Government have agreed with our European and Commonwealth partners on taking certain measures designed to give a clear signal to South Africa. The three situations are quite different and I have no doubt about the rightness of our position on each of them.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: My right hon. and learned Friend spoke of a clear signal, but does not all this signalling to South Africa lack precision? South Africans, and some hon. Members, would like to know what exactly the South African Government are expected to do before these measures are withdrawn. What stage of the reform process is supposed to be reached? Will my right hon. and learned Friend define the purpose of his diplomacy a little more precisley?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The position has been made clear beyond any possible doubt, both in the mission that I undertook and in the mission that the Eminent Persons Group undertook. In each case we were pressing the South African Government to be ready to commence a dialogue with leaders of all groups in South Africa, and to create the climate for that to be possible to release unconditionally Nelson Mandela and the other political prisoners, to unban the African National Congress and the other political parties, and to create the circumstances in which all the people of South Africa can make their consent available to constitutional measures acceptable to them all.

Mr. Healey: Now that the United States, in pursuit of the same objectives as the Foreign Secretary has just described, has decided to impose wide-ranging sanctions against South Africa, which go far beyond the shamefully trivial measures agreed by the Community in September, and especially in the light of the fact that Her Majesty's Government have rightly accepted the principal of punitive sanctions by the measures that they announced against Syria yesterday, will the Foreign Secretary, as President of the Foreign Affairs Council, seek to bring the Community into line with the rest of the civilised world by adopting the same measures as the United States has adopted? Moreover, will he go to the Security Council to seek to make those measures mandatory sanctions under the United Nations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have done that which the President of the Council was required to do in seeking, in two meetings in the past two or three weeks, to promote consensus on the measures agreed on 15 and 16 September. It has not been possible to take consensus further than the measures then agreed, but the Community Foreign Ministers taken as a whole do not see the case for going down the path advocated by the right hon. Gentleman. However, I am sure that the whole House will be glad to welcome this one occasion when the right hon. Gentleman is keen to encourage us to follow the example of the United States.

Gibraltar

7. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Gibraltar for discussions with the Chief Minister and Members of the House of Assembly.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans to visit Gibraltar in the near future, but I naturally consult the Chief Minister and his colleagues at regular intervals.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply and I am well aware that he has discussions with the Chief Minister in London. I am sorry that he cannot find time to go to Gibraltar to have similar discussions not only with the Chief Minister but with Members of the House of Assembly. May I draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to the recent reported remarks by the Prime Minister of Spain, Senor Felipe Gonzalez, that he wants a solution to the Gibraltar

problem to be reached within four years, and that if that does not happen there will be serious repercussions for the people of Gibraltar? Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear to the Spanish Government that the sovereignty of the people of Gibraltar is not for trading, and that the preamble to the constitution of Gibraltar will remain so long as the people of Gibraltar wish to remain British?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the central point of my hon. Friend's question, I am not sure that the reports that we have seen of the remarks by the Spanish Prime Minister are necessarily complete, but the substance of his point is contained in those reports. It is right to say that this is not the first occasion on which Spain has mentioned time scales in that context. Our position is quite clear. Our commitment to respect the wishes of the people of Gibraltar remains unchanged. The discussions that are taking place must take place in the context of that commitment. They are not susceptible to handling by the imposition of time scales, nor can their outcome be predetermined, but it is right to say that those discussions are taking place under the Brussels agreement of November 1984 in a friendly and constructive spirit, as is appropriate between two European allies and partners.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Foreign Secretary aware of the concerns that are being expressed by and on behalf of the small community of workers of Indian origin living in Gibraltar who feel angry that their wives are not being allowed to join them, or are being expelled from the territory or, on some occasions, if their wives are pregnant, are being asked to leave on the ground of some form of immigration control? As we have a responsibility for the territory, what does the right hon. and learned Gentleman propose to do about that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I propose to look into the facts of the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Latham: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm the point that he did not mention in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), which is that the British Government are negotiating firmly on the basis of the Gibraltar constitution which this House approved?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I thought that I had made it absolutely plain that our commitment to respect the wishes of the people of Gibraltar, which is set out in the preamble to the Gibraltar constitution, remains unchanged. It is most important to understand that the discussions are taking place on that basis.

South Africa

8. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet representatives of the Government of South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As part of my European Presidency mission, I had discussions with South African Ministers in Pretoria in July. I have no present plans for further meetings with representatives of the South African Government although normal Government-to-Government contacts continue.

Mr. Alton: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that his hand was weakened with representatives of the South African Government because of our Government's reluctant support for sanctions and acquiescence in the imposition of sanctions when some were belatedly imposed? Does he not agree with the findings of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, which said that the deferment of sanctions was one of the reasons why the apartheid system would not be changed?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not agree with that judgment of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, because our view on sanctions is not precisely the same as that of members of that group. I do not think that my hand in presenting to the South African Government the case on which we all agree was weakened. I went there with the backing of a united European Community, the backing of a united Commonwealth, and the backing of the United States Government, on the substance of remedies. One should be dismayed about the fact that, notwithstanding that universal backing and the extent to which it might be thought that I went with some sympathetic understanding of South Africa's problems, the advice that I had to offer was rejected. That is a matter for great regret.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: While my right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right to seek the withdrawal of South Africa from Namibia and the withdrawal of the Cubans from Angola, would it not be wrong to make the one conditional on the other? Will he take this opportunity to make it perfectly clear that he believes that any such linkage is a setback to international diplomacy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The position has been the same for a number of years. We have joined Commonwealth partners and others in rejecting any formal linkage. However, it is not to be excluded that the two questions might be more readily resolved together rather than separately.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Secretary of State condemn continued reporting restrictions in South Africa, which suppress so much of the horror that is going on in that country? Will he support the NUJ's appeal to set up an independent news agency in that country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have joined our international partners in deploring the curtailment of press freedom in South Africa. It must be seen as a consequence of the general state of events in that country. We deplore such press restrictions in every part of the world.

Mr. Dykes: Is my right hon. and learned Friend not seriously disturbed by the ominous stories coming out, with a news blackout, which may be expanded rumours, suggesting that over 20,000 pople have been detained in South Africa, that many have been brutally beaten up in gaol, and that probably well over 1,000 pople have been killed since the reinforced emergency by the security forces began? I appreciate the difficulties, but will my right hon. and learned Friend consider summoning the ambassador to express our grave concern and anxiety about those trends and ominous rumours coming out, and asking him to give us a factual and logical report of the picture in those disturbed circumstances?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The whole House, together with the international community, has condemned many times the continuance of the state of emergency in South Africa and some actions and measures taken under it. We have taken a number of opportunities to bring that home to the South African Government. It is one of the features that I brought home very clearly during my visit to South Africa.

Mr. Winnick: Bearing in mind what the United States Government have decided to do, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) pointed out, does the Foreign Secretary have any conception of how humiliating it is for Britain to endorse and see in action what he is doing in relation to South Africa? Does the Foreign Secretary not recognise that one has to take sides? One is on the side either of the South African authorities, or of those who fight to liberate the country from the tyranny of apartheid.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that most hon. Members have a different view from that of the hon. Gentleman about relative standards of humiliation. The fact is—I cannot underline this too strongly—that there is no dissent whatsoever between the Government and the Opposition about the unwisdom and evil of apartheid and the need for it to be replaced as quickly as possible. The problem is to find the best way of securing its removal. It is the firmly held view, not just of Her Majesty's Government but of many people in this country and elsewhere, that to go down the road of imposing sanction after sanction is to make the prospects of change less likely. The hon. Gentleman should accept that point without qualification.

Mr. John Townend: When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets representatives of the South African Government, will he make it crystal clear to them at what stage sanctions will be withdrawn if the reform programme continues? Will he make it clear that the British Government do not demand that there should be a one-man one-vote in a unitary state?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not the business of the British Government, or that of any Government, to promote precise prescriptions for the replacement of apartheid in South Africa. We wish to see a non-racial representative Government brought about with the consent of the peoples of South Africa, after a dialogue between Government and representatives of the black people, along the lines I have described so many times.

Mr. Anderson: In his dealings with the South African Government, has the Foreign Secretary forgotten about Namibia? Now that the Crocker initiative has effectively been abandoned by the United States of America, does the Western contact group exist in anything but name? When did that group last meet for any substantive discussion? Are the Government prepared to allow the Namibian question to drift, or will the Foreign Secretary take a new initiative and ask for sanctions against South Africa? Surely the case for sanctions in relation to Namibia is even stronger than that concerning the internal position in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our position on Namibia is the same as it has been for some time. We wish, just as the rest of the internal community does, to see a solution of the Namibian question along the lines of resolution 235. It is in that context, as in any other, that we do not believe that sanctions will be an effective way of securing implementation of the resolution. We believe that negotiation still offers the best way of achieving an internationally acceptable solution on the basis agreed by the South African Government. The United Kingdom has maitained a common position of contact with partners in abstaining from recent resolutions calling for sanctions.

Nicaragua

10. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Committee for a Free Nicaragua; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): None, Sir.

Mr. Patchett: In view of the Government's strong anti-terrorist position, will the Minister display consistency by making a statement dissociating himself from any person, party or country supporting the Contra terrorists active in Nicaragua?

Mr. Eggar: With regard to the organisation to which the substantive question referred, it is fundamental to any democratic society that individuals and groups should be allowed to lobby freely on behalf of their political and other aims, provided that their activities remain within the law.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend condemn the censorship which exists in that country? The fact is that civil rights are badly affected in that country, martial law has been imposed and there is a singular lack of freedom. Does my hon. Friend agree that that aspect must be considered?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend. After all, certain civil rights were suspended in Nicaragua last October. It is of considerable concern that recently the Opposition Newspaper *La Prensa* was closed and two bishops were expelled.

Mr. Corbyn: Has not Nicaragua been in a state of war since the revolution of 1979 due to United States' aggression, and have not thousands of innocent people been murdered by Contra forces financed by the United States? Is not the least that the Minister could do the taking of action to prevent organisations working for the Contra recruiting people from this country to go to Central America to destroy a democratic Government and murder innocent people?

Mr. Eggar: It is a pity that, after the long recess, the hon. Gentleman remains as clouded by prejudice as usual.

Mr. Churchill: Is it not a matter of concern that the Nicaraguan regime should have been persecuting the Mesquito Indian minority? Will my hon. Friend on behalf of Her Majesty's Government condemn that persecution?

Mr. Eggar: Of course Her Majesty's Government condemn all human rights abuses.

Mr. Wareing: Is the Minister not taking prevarication to a fine art with the answers that he has given to Labour Members? If the Government are opposed to terrorism, torture, rape and mass murder of innocent peasants, no matter where they are, can he not give a positive answer to the questions that he has been asked? Should not the Government be registering the protest of what is probably the majority of the British people against the mass murders being perpetrated by those being trained by our allies, the United States?

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's Government condemn human rights abuses, wherever they may occur. However, the hon. Gentleman should be prepared to condemn publicly the abuses of civil rights that have happened inside Nicaragua.

Mr. Foulkes: Let us return to the question. Is the Minister aware that the inaptly named Committee for a Free Nicaragua, which is organising mercenaries to fight alongside the Contra terrorists, is run by an officer of the Federation of Conservative Students, who has privileged access to the House as the research assistant of the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle)? Why is it that the chairman of the Tory party is able to discipline a Tory student officer who merely upsets Lord Stockton, but refuses to take any action to stop this Tory support for state-sponsored terrorism? Will the Minister now restore some little respect to the Conservative party by dissociating himself and the Government from the actions of the Committee for a Free Nicaragua?

Mr. Eggar: It is a pity that the hon. Member did not listen to the answer that I gave to the first supplementary question. As he did not, perhaps I should repeat it. It is fundamental to any democratic society that individuals and groups should be allowed to lobby freely on behalf of their political and other aims, provided that the activities remain within the law. I should have thought that Labour Members, above all, would be aware of that. After all, that is what the Knowsley, North Labour party has been doing over the past few days.

Mr. Beith: Is it not a travesty to suggest that the people of Nicaragua could be freed by gangsterism and banditry supported by the Government of the United States? Should not those with influence in the United States persuade that country to end its support for this activity, and should not those who have influence in Nicaragua be speaking up for human rights in that country?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Of course there is a role for the United Kingdom, and we are playing it very actively—together with our European partners—in promoting a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Central America. We are working through the Contadora process.

Cyprus

11. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met a representative of the Government of Turkey to discuss the situaton in northern Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend met the Turkish Foreign Minister during the European Community Turkey Association Council meeting in September. He made clear the Twelve's well-known position of support for Senor Perez de Cuellar's efforts to reach a settlement on Cyprus. We continue actively to support the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative there.

Mr. Gregory: As Britain's ties with Cyprus go back to 1878, and as it is a fellow member of both the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth, will the Government take a lead in the international community in trying to restore the peaceful and sovereign state of Cyprus?

Mr. Eggar: We do, of course, work very closely with the Secretary-General and we support his initiative. He is determined to carry on with his peace efforts and has repeatedly told us how much he values our assistance.

Mr. Heffer: Will the Minister remind the Turkish Government that they are part of NATO, which is supposed to defend democracy and freedom? Is it not time that they were reminded that they used NATO forces and troops to occupy an area that was not theirs? Is it not also time that our Government got off the fence and told the Turkish Government to get out of Cyprus at the earliest possible moment?

Mr. Eggar: We obviously are determined to assist the Secretary-General in his efforts to achieve a peaceful solution within Cyprus — *[Interruption.]* I wish that Opposition Members, especially the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), would not take such a simplistic approach to what are basically complicated questions.

Mr. Hickmet: When will my hon. Friend the Minister and his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State decide that it is time to stop reciting the formula that the Government support the good efforts of the Secretary-General, because his good offices have failed? The British Government must decide what to do about that. The fact is that the Secretary-General's mission has failed due to the intransigence of Mr. Papandreos and the Greek Government.

Mr. Eggar: As my hon. Friend knows, the Secretary-General met President Kyprianou and Mr. Denktas in New York last month to discuss the initiative. We are hopeful that progress can be made and shall continue to do all that we can to support the Secretary-General. My hon. Friend may not be aware that it was recently announced that the United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Goulding, would be visiting Cyprus soon.

Mr. Bob Edwards: Is the Minister aware that the treatment of Cyprus is unprecedented? That country, which is a member of the Commonwealth and of the Council of Europe, and whose representative sits on the Council of Ministers, is occupied by a foreign power. Even though it is allied to us through NATO, we contemplate no action to get rid of the Turkish army. That makes agreement in the Community impossible.

Mr. Eggar: I must make it quite clear once again that we are working hard to ensure a peace settlement in Cyprus. We are working to support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General, and that must be the best way to proceed.

Mr. Jim Spicer: Does my hon. Friend agree that as a guarantor power in 1974 we had a duty to intervene in that conflict? Do not the guilty men sit on the Labour Benches, because they refused to take any action then which would have prevented a division of the island?

Mr. Eggar: I take careful note of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Freeson: Is not the sticking point in an undoubtedly complicated situation regarding the peace settlement the refusal to accept the early removal of a foreign army from Cyprus? Until it is accepted that that foreign occupying army should be removed at a very early stage in the process, there will be no settlement. What is the Government's position on the removal of a foreign army—the only one in western Europe to be occupying the territory of another country?

Mr. Eggar: The two sides to the dispute obviously hold different views about the position of troops on the island of Cyprus. Part of the difficulty that the United Nations

Secretary-General faces in bringing about a peaceful solution is that he has to reach an agreement on the future of the Turkish and other troops on the island.

Sir Peter Mills: Despite what the Minister has said, we have to redouble our efforts to resolve this problem. Will he bear in mind that there is no question of Turkey entering the Community until this problem is solved? It would help very much if the Minister made representations to the Americans about their aid to Turkey, which really means that they are supporting foreign troops in Cyprus.

Mr. Eggar: No application has yet been made by Turkey to join the European Community. The priority for Turkey, the United Kingdom and the Community is that the association agreement should be made to work properly.

Mr. George Robertson: The Minister can see that there is genuine concern in the House about this issue. He says that no formal application for membership of the European Community has been made by Turkey, but reports in today's newspapers suggest that a formal application to join the European Community will be made by Turkey next month. Surely there can be no question of the British Government supporting that application or acquiescing to it so long as foreign troops remain in occupation of the northern part of Cyprus?

Mr. Eggar: No such application has yet been made. If and when an application is made, these matters will have to be considered, together with many others.

Argentina

13. **Mr. Bob Edwards** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the past three months towards the normalisation of relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina.

16. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretaryof State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Argentina over the Falkland Islands.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have repeatedly demonstrated our desire for more normal relations with Argentina. Regrettably, the Argentine Government still show no willingness to respond to the many initiatives we have taken since 1982.

Mr. Edwards: That is a very sad reply. It is vital that some encouragement should be given to this new, democratic Government in Argentina. If we can maintain diplomatic relations with Spain, which has a claim on Gibraltar, there should be no diffieulty, now that there is a democratic Government in Argentina, about restoring diplomatic relations with that country. I hope that the Foreign Secretary will have another think about that vital question.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The fact remains that although Argentina now has a democratic Government, about which we have expressed congratulations many times, and a long time ago, the President of Argentina and the Argentine Government have shown no willingness to recognise the rights of the people of the Falkland Islands to have their wishes respected. All the initiatives that we have taken towards restoring normal relations have been rebutted by the Argentine Government. We abolished financial restrictions. The have done so only to a limited extent. We have proposed the resumption of air links but have received no response. We have lifted trading restrictions but have received no formal response. We allow Argentine vessels into British ports. They ban British vessels from Argentine ports. We have offered to return Argentine dead to their native land but the Argentines insist that they remain on the Falklands to support their claim to sovereignty over the islands. Spain and the United Kingdom are members of the European Community and the North Atlantic Alliance, but in terms of Britain and the Argentine we are the country against whom Argentina launched an armed assault four years ago.

Mr. Dalyell: Following the Gimenez visit, would it not at least be constructive to contact the International Red Cross with a view to visits to the Falklands by Argentine families?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that I heard the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question correctly. We have made a number of suggestions through the Red Cross about our willingness to accept next of kin visits to the Falkland Islands, but we have had no response from the Argentine Government.

Mr. Crouch: As someone who recently spent nearly two weeks in Buenos Aires, I can tell my right hon. and learned Friend that public opinion there is not in any way anti-British. There is strong feeling about just one item, the sovereignty of the Falklands, and it seems to be held largely by Members of Congress and by Ministries and is not in the minds of the general public. Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear that in mind, because underneath Government opinion in the Argentine there is a feeling that they want to re-establish good relations with Britain?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the point made by my hon. Friend. The House will welcome his insight and that of this colleagues following the visit of the IPU delegation to Argentina. There is a great deal in the point that he makes. The United Kingdom has been trying to respond to the feeling he mentions by the suggestions that I have spoken about. We have suggested measure after measure to enable us to begin normalising relations with Argentina. The Argentina Government have repeatedly made it clear that the only matter on which they wish to commence discussions is that of sovereignty. That is at the top of the agenda, but it is the most difficult question and one on which we have made our position clear. That is why it is proving so difficult to bring about what my hon. Friend would like.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: During their discussions with representatives from the Falkland Islands, did Ministers not realise that if the financial terms were right the people of the Falkland Islands would accept resettlement? If they would not accept resettlement, they would certainly accept a change in sovereignty. In so far as some calculations put expenditure on the Falkands in excess of £1,000 million a year, would it not be far more cost-effective to spend money on compensation rather than to squander taxpayers' money in the way that the Government are doing?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House will have been somewhat astonished by the grisly spectacle of the hon. Gentleman speaking with such contempt about a matter of this kind. All we are seeking to do is to uphold the

wishes of the people in the Falkland Islands. They are representatives of a community that lived undisturbed in those islands for more than 150 years until their life was brutally disturbed by the Argentine invasion only four years ago.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Foreign Secretary not accept that, as it is now more than four years since the end of the Falklands war, it is regrettable that we do not have direct diplomatic relations with a basically friendly country, as Conservative Members have said? Will the Foreign Secretary take the opportunity of a new Brazilian ambassador coming to London to examine again the possibility of reopening direct diplomatic relations wth Argentina?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The longer the hon. Gentleman addresses himself to this question, the more he understands its difficulties. It is quite right to say that we would like to see the establishment of more normal relations with Argentina, without embarking on negotiations about sovereignty. It is in pursuit of precisely such relations that we have removed the restrictions I have listed. We have removed trade restrictions and have offered to remove all aeronautical restrictions. We have also removed financial restrictions, but to all those measures we have received no response, or less than a complete response from Argentina. The Argentina Government have not indicated their willingness to take the necessary steps down the road that the hon. Gentleman wishes them to take.

Cyprus

14. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cyprus to discuss the continued division of that island.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to do so. We are in regular contact with the Cyprus Government at the highest level. As I have already made clear, we take every opportunity to urge all the parties to co-operate with the United Nations Secretary-General in the continuing search for a settlement in Cyprus.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Minister agree that the attitude of the Turkish Government to the efforts of the United Nations has been unhelpful to say the least, especially when, earlier this year, a delegation of leading Turkish politicians and others paid a provocative visit to the Turkish-occupied part of northern Cyprus?

Mr. Eggar: It is obviously important that all sides and parties to the dispute within Cyprus understand the problems that the other sides face at all times. But, as the hon. Gentleman knows well—I know his long interest in the affairs of Cyprus—it is a highly complex situation and it does nobody any credit to simplify it.

Mr. Budgen: Will the British Government emphasise to the Turkish Government that the situation in Cyprus is no barrier to the entry of Turkey into the EEC and that the EEC is open to all democratic states in Europe?

Mr. Eggar: As I have already made clear twice, Turkey has not yet applied for membership of the EC and therefore those considerations have not come into effect.

Mr. Norman Atkinson: The Minister has so far evaded the question of the Turkish troops in Cyprus. Does not that evasion show that the Government have no views on whether the troops should be removed?

Mr. Eggar: No. Clearly, the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Republic of Cyprus must form part of a comprehensive settlement.

Mr. Lawrence: Have further steps been taken to protect the lives of British service men and their families in the sovereign bases following the attack upon Akrotiri by the Abu Nidal terrorists?

Mr. Eggar: It is by no means clear where that attack came from or which organisation was behind it, but following it the authorities within the sovereign base have taken precautions.

Australia and New Zealand

15. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when next he plans to pay an official visit to Australia and New Zealand.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to do so during the course of next year. The dates have yet to be agreed.

Mr. Hamilton: Will the Minister take this opportunity of defending and applauding the robustly independent attitude of the New Zealand Government in respect of nuclear weapons, and will he at the same time deplore the attempts of the American Government to whip New Zealand into the nuclear line?

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. Friend the noble Baroness Young said in another place on 19 March, the New Zealand legislation will be a matter of great regret. Defence co-operation is an important part of our bilateral relationship and Royal Navy visits have traditionally formed an integral part of that. If they cannot be resumed, the relationship will be diminished.

Sir Peter Blaker: As a result of the New Zealand Government's repudiation of the nuclear defence assumptions of its defence pact with the United States, it has, in effect, been kicked out of that pact and no longer enjoys the protection of the United States. Does that not have a moral for those parties in Britain who wish us to repudiate the nuclear deterrence basis on which NATO is founded?

Mr. Eggar: As usual, my right hon. Friend is right and makes his point well.

Mr. Janner: Will the Minister take the opportunity when it arises to commend the Australian Government on their robust attitude to sanctions against South Africa and explain why it is that Her Majesty's Government impose visa restrictions on people who wish to come here from parts of the Commonwealth and none whatever on people who wish to come here from South Africa.

Mr. Eggar: I am not sure whether the hon. and learned Gentleman's latter point is relevant to the question on the Order Paper. It is not for us to comment on the attitude that the Australian authorities and Government may take to relations with South Africa.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that those of us with fairly long memories remember with

glory the exploits of the New Zealand Division in north Africa during the last war, and are deeply sad that that country has separated itself from the Western alliance? We very much hope that it will soon come back.

Mr. Eggar: I am sure that the New Zealand people and Government will pay particular attention to my hon. Friend's comments.

South Africa

18. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if European Economic Community discussions about joint action against South Africa take place within the framework of political co-operation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Foreign Ministers of the Twelve discussed South Africa in Political Co-operation on 15 and 16 September and again on 27 October. They will continue to pay close attention to the issue.

Mr. Deakins: Does not the situation in the Community over South Africa illustrate the confusion that exists in institutional arrangements, which is now being sanctified by the Single European Act? Political co-operation is supposed to be separate from the rest of the EEC's activities, yet the absurd and limited sanctions against South Africa have had to be imposed by Trade Ministers. Does that not illustrate the confusion underlying the Government's approach on this issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that it illustrates no such thing, save the hon. Gentleman's ignorance of the facts. The decisions on the measures against South Africa were taken by Community Ministers meeting in political co-operation, but the implementation of the measures was agreed at meetings of the Council on Monday, because the trade measures had to be taken by a regulation at that Council. Those measures were agreed not by Trade Ministers but by Foreign Ministers meeting in the General Affairs Council. The purpose and effect of the Single European Act is to bring closer together the working of those various institutions.

Mr. Healey: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now answer the question that I put to him yesterday? Is it the Government's view that it is the responsibility of the Community as such to ensure compliance with the decisions of the European Council on sanctions against South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The question depends on the precise instrument under which the particular sanctions are imposed——

Mr. Healey: Answer the question.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I will do so if the right hon. Gentleman gives me a chance. For example, action on coins has been taken under a regulation agreed on Monday, in line with decisions already taken and announced in the House by this Government. The decision on a ban on investment was taken by representatives of member states meeting on Monday, and will be enforced by member states according to their specific requirements.

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, to do with questions. I do not wish to raise either the fact that no Opposition Member was called who supports the Turkish-Cypriot case or that no hon. Member was called who argues that Argentina's claim to sovereignty over the Falklands is valid. What I want to raise is whether it is not ridiculous that we have an hour of Foreign Affairs questions in which not a single reference to the breaking of diplomatic relations with Syria can be made. Is it not necessary that the relevant authorities should examine the advisability of leaving a five-minute gap in the hour for Foreign Affairs questions so that emergency, last-minute questions could be put in? We could then have an opportunity to discuss the fact that the breaking of relations with Syria was not done on the judgment of the Foreign Office but on the diktat of No. 10.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That would be an interesting suggestion to put to the Procedure Committee. However, I was glad that I was able to call the hon. Gentleman on question No. 1.

Mr. Tony Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), as you will recall that yesterday you cut short a statement by the Foreign Secretary——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not cut short statements.

Mr. Banks: You said so.

Mr. Speaker: I did not. I said that today I would bear in mind those who were not called yesterday. That is exactly what I have done.

Mr. Banks: No, you did not, Sir.

Mr. Faulds: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point, and I said that he should put his interesting suggestion to the Procedure Committee.

South Atlantic Fisheries

3.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, I should like to make a statement on South Atlantic fisheries.

The Government are today taking steps to establish a Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone. It will be generally of 150 miles radius from the Falkland Islands. At the same time we are declaring the entitlement of the Falklands, under international law, to a fisheries limit of 200 miles, subject to delimitation with Argentina. We are also confirming our rights to jurisdiction over the continental shelf up to the limits prescribed by the rules of international law.

The necessary legislative measures will be introduced shortly in the Falkland Islands. Our action is taken in agreement with the Governor and his Executive Council. We are informing the fishing nations, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, our allies and partners, the European Commission, the United Nations and other Governments concerned, including Argentina. Copies of the declaration have been placed in the Library of the House.

The House will know that the rapid increase in fishing in the south-west Atlantic, with its serious impact on fish stocks there, has aroused widespread concern. The Government share that concern and have been active in trying to meet it.

From the outset, the Government took the view that the problem would best be solved on a collaborative basis. Accordingly, as a result of a British initiative in March 1985, a study was launched last November at the Food and Agriculture Organisation. We gave it every support. We saw this as the first step to agreeing multilateral conservation and management arrangements under FAO auspices. In public, and directly to the Argentine Government, I made clear our view that a solution without prejudice to our respective positions on sovereignty could and should be found. However, some fishing nations have not co-operated fully with the FAO study, and its preparation has been delayed.

Pending completion of the study, we took steps to reduce by voluntary means the impact of the fishing effort in the 1986 season. We had hoped to extend these voluntary arrangements into 1987.

Argentina has pursued a different course, and her actions have undermined the multilateral approach. In particular, Argentina has embarkd on aggressive patrolling more than 200 miles from Patagonia and within 200 miles of the Falklands. Unlawful use of force by Argentina led in one case to loss of life and the sinking of a vessel. Argentina has concluded bilateral fisheries agreements with the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. Through these agreements Argentina purports to exercise jurisdiction that is a matter of international law the entitlement of the Falkland Islands. These agreements are incompatible with the multilateral initiative.

In sum, the Argentine Government's recent actions show an indifference to conservation needs and a preference for obstruction rather then co-operation. The Government are determined that there should be adequate protection for the fishery. In view of the failure of Argentina to co-operate in a multilateral approach, we have therefore decided to establish unilaterally a conservation and management regime. We remain, however, ready to work for a multilateral arrangement, which would still be our preference, just as soon as that can be achieved. I have made this clear to the Argentine Foreign Minister and suggested to him that we should review how Britain and Argentina can co-operate to support conservation on a regional basis.

The legislation to be introduced by the Falkland Islands Government will take effect from 1 February 1987. Its aim will be to preserve the viability of the fishery. Fishing within the conservation zone will be licensed by the Falkland Islands Government. Licensing will reflect conservation needs. The Falkland Islands Government will use its own civilian fisheries protection vessels and a surveillance aircraft.

Revenue and costs will be for the Falkland Islands Government. The conservation zone for most of its circumference will be co-extensive with the protection zone. Our forces stationed at the Falklands will continue to deter Argentine aggression and maintain the integrity of the protection zone.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): The Foreign Secretary will be aware that he has made a very serious statement which embeds Her Majesty's Government still deeper in the quagmire of the Falklands commitment. He knows that his announcement is bound to make negotiations with Argentina more difficult and to reduce still further the minuscule minority of Governments in the United Nations who support the British position on this issue. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has just announced the unilateral imposition of a fishing zone around the Falklands, which is something that he told the House last year was not justified. In his statement to the House on 14 March 1985 he explicitly supported the Select Commitee for drawing attention to the "political and practical problems" of policing such a zone when it comprises some 70,000 square miles of ocean, in part overlapping a zone already established by Argentina. He has dumped the responsibility for policing such a zone on the population of the Falklands, which is half that of the average parish in the United Kingdom. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman regard the Falklands Government as being free to use force in imposing this unilateral decision against any fishing vessel which may, without agreement, fish in the zone?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman is entirely right to draw attention to the fact that 18 months ago it was still our view that we should strive to achieve a multilateral agreement on this matter. It is for that reason that we have striven so hard to do so and why it was only after the lapse of that time and in face of the actions of the Government of Argentina, that I have listed, that we reached the conclusion that a unilateral regime has to be imposed at this time. As I said in the statement, we remain ready and willing to achieve a multilateral regime as soon as possible. It must be the Government of Argentina who take the steps to make that possible. They have failed to do so thus far.

There is no question of Her Majesty's Government embedding themselves deeper in a quagmire, which was the graphic phrase chosen by the right hon. Gentleman. We are asserting, as is necessary, the maintenance of our sovereignty, the preservation of fish stocks in the south Atlantic and the jurisdiction we are entitled and obliged

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to exercise. The policing of the fisheries conservation zone will be undertaken by civilian surveillance aircraft and fisheries protection vessels of the Falklands Government. That will be comparable to the division made in United Kingdom waters. It is open to Her Majesty's Government to use armed forces in appropriate circumstances in the waters around the Falkland Islands, as well as in waters elsewhere within our jurisdiction.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that he will receive the wholehearted support of the Conservative Benches for the decisive action that he has taken and that we, at any rate, will reject the surly and weak-kneed reaction of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey)? Is it not perfectly clear that, if the Government had not been prepared to take such decisive action now, there would have been lasting and serious damage to the fishery stocks of the south Atlantic, with harm not only to the Falkland Islanders but to a much wider range of countries as well?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for the support of my right hon. Friend. He is precisely right in his diagnosis of what would have happened had we not taken the action which he commends.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): On the grounds of fishing and fish stock conservation alone, I believe that the statement was fully justified. However, was it naval grounds which made the Foreign Secretary limit it to 150 miles, which seems prudent? Will the Foreign Secretary now say to the Government of Argentina that, although he is not ready to consider a transfer of sovereignty to Argentina, he is ready to discuss other alternatives such as pooling sovereignty and a possible transfer of sovereignty to the Security Council of the United Nations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's first comment. The decision on the precise extent of the zone depends, among other things, on what is practical and sensible to set out in the circumstances within the maximum 200 miles that we could have claimed. Sovereignty remains a matter which is not for negotiation. It is not possible to contemplate moving in that direction when one realises the total reluctance of the Government of Argentina to take even the most elementary steps towards normalising relations along the lines we have so often described.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): The long delay in coming to a decision has been harmful to fish stocks. Is it not yet another illustration of the impossibility of coming to an agreement about anything with the present Government of Argentina? Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the Falklands Government have enough resources to police the area?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is the basis of the decision on which the Falkland Islands Government will be provided with the resources that I have mentioned, with the availability of Her Majesty's forces at the Falklands to maintain the security and integrity of the protection zone.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that, if his statement is to be in any way meaningful to the British fishing industry, the owners of the much depleted distant-water fleets will have to convince their bankers that the new regime that he has announced will be secure and will stop the depletion of stocks? Is he further aware of the desperate financial plight of the distant-water sector of the fishing industry? Finally, does he believe that what he has said today will provide sufficient confidence to create the level of bank lending necessary?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising those practical questions. He will recollect that some companies already have joint ventures with some of the far eastern fishing fleets and that other joint ventures are under discussion. The number of British vessels among those already fishing around the Falklands is a small proportion of the total. We hope that the establishment of this conservation zone will offer scope for the expansion of British fishing efforts in those waters because within the framework of the conservation regime, first priority will be given to vessels connected with the Falklands. We hope that the British element will grow rapidly. We believe that the arrangements that we have made will be adequate for the protection of the zone with the support of Her Majesty's forces in appropriate circumstances.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his statement will be warmly welcomed by our fellow citizens in the Falkland Islands and every member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Falkland Islands group in this House? What estimate has been made of the additional revenue to the Falkland Islands from the licensing arrangements? Are additional facilities expected in Port Stanley for the revictualling or refuelling of ships which will use the port as a result of the agreement?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The revenue will depend on the number of licences applied for and issued. We expect the revenue to make a useful addition to that of the Falkland Islands Government, taking account of their present financial circumstances. The facilities on the islands will be considered in the light of the scale of demand that develops.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Foreign Secretary concede that much of the difficulty could have been obviated if the Government had shown more enthusiasm for the third United Nations convention on the law of the sea? How does this particular proposal stand in relation to that convention? The Foreign Secretary mentioned the division of the continental shelf. How does he propose to have the Falkland Islands Government negotiate median lines with neighbouring states, including Argentina?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the law of the sea, the 200-mile zone, within which the fishery conservation zone is being established, does not depend on the convention. That has been accepted by the International Court of Justice. On the continental shelf and the question of delimitation on the south-western side, facing Argentina, we have taken account of the need for delimitation in the precise border of the zone that we have established. Beyond that it would be a matter for negotiation, which we hope can take place.

Sir Anthony Buck (Colchester, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his statement will be welcomed by most of us—at least by those of us who have had the privilege of visiting the Falkland Islands?

Will he say a little more about the enforcement of the arrangements? It seems hard that the burden should fall in the way he describes. Might it not be necessary for there to be further Royal Navy or Royal Air Force deployment there to assist with the enforcement of these arrangements?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, Sir. The position is the same as in every other area where fishery rights are being protected. The function of fisheries protection is undertaken by the fisheries protection resources, which will consist of civilian Falkland Islands Government fisheries officers with a surveillance aircraft and two fisheries protection vessels. That is comparable to provision in United Kingdom waters and should be adequate for the purposes. If there were a need for further support, as everywhere else, it is open to the Government to use armed forces in appropriate circumstances. The tasks of the existing garrison will continue to be to deter Argentine aggression and to maintain the integrity of the Falkland Islands protection zone.

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): I should like to follow precisely that point. Are the resources for the Falkland Islands Government in manpower and ships other than utterly inadequate to deal with the size of Russian, Japanese and other machinery there? Is it not completely erroneous to believe that they can cope without bringing the British military presence into direct confrontation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, if the matter is handled normally, as it is in other parts of the world. The scale of the fishery protection resources available is believed to be adequate, and comparable to provisions made in United Kingdom waters. Beyond that, the resources of the garrison remain available to deter Argentine aggression and to maintain the integrity of the protection zone.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): The Government have shown great patience in trying to get a multilateral agreement on this important matter. I cannot agree with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) that it will exacerbate relations between our two Governments. The Argentine Government, I might remind my right hon. and learned Friend, had already made separate fishing agreements with the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. I believe that they feel that it is strange that we have not done anything to conserve fish, but now we are doing something.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. One factor that we took into account was the fact that Argentina had been making agreements of this kind with the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, purporting to exercise jurisdiction—as a matter of international law, however, it is the entitlement of the Falkland Islands — and making agreements that were incompatible with the multilateral initiative. Because of that, we felt obliged to take this measure unilaterally. We remain anxious to secure a multilateral conclusion if that is possible.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Was it not impossible to secure agreement with Argentina on this issue as long as the British Government refused even to discuss sovereignty with them? That being so, would it not have been better to listen to the pleas of the fishing industry much earlier, to take temporary action of this kind before the East European trawlers came in to scoop the pool, and to get on with the job of improving Britain's diplomatic relations with Argentina?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I fancy that I detect a certain difference of emphasis on this between the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. partner on the Front bench, the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). We have been trying, since we took our initiative at the beginning of last year, to establish a multilateral fishery conservation regime, but that has proved impossible. Argentina has taken the actions that I have mentioned, which make it even more difficult to achieve. In those circumstances, to suggest that it would be easier to negotiate about sovereignty than about this single practical thing seems absurd.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on this decision and observe that it is better late than never? To what extent will there be increased opportunities for the British deep-sea fishing industry in that the Government could negotiate rights for foreign vessels to fish in Falklands waters in return for increased opportunities for British vessels to fish in other countries' waters?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That question extends national ambitions in a sensible fashion, which should be taken account of. The key is that we have created a framework which existing joint ventures between British fishing vessels and others in Falklands waters can begin to expand. That may create other opportunities.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In the interests of conserving these valuable stocks, a decision was certainly needed. I argued some two years ago in an article in the *Glasgow Herald* that we needed a bilateral fisheries agreement between Britain and Argentina in the hope that it would diminish hostility between the two. Anyone with a knowledge of the fishing industry and of the fisheries protection service knows that a fisheries protection service cannot be introduced in circumstances such as these overnight. It is a complicated business.

Bearing in mind the difficulties associated with policing fishing activities, do the Government intend to transfer one or two unarmed fisheries protection vessels from the United Kingdom fleet to help the Falklanders manage the stocks?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful that the decision to establish a conservation regime is in line with the advice offered by the hon. Gentleman at an earlier stage, and I am glad that he endorses——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): My hon. Friend wanted a bilateral agreement with Agrentina.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Let me answer the hon. Gentleman's question. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) must contain himself.

I am also glad to respond to the advice of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) about the desirability of achieving, if possible, a bilateral-multilateral regime. It is for that reason that we have striven for so long to do it. It is for that reason, as I have said, that we remain ready to work for a multilateral arrangement, which would still be our preference. I have

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made that clear to the Argentine Government. In the absence of that, we have to take this action, as I think the hon. Gentleman recognises. Fisheries protection vessels will be in place by the time the zone comes into effect on 1 February 1987. That is why I gave that as the date of commencement. The necessary support from armed forces, if it became necessary, would come from the present garrison at the Falklands.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Although I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement, I must point out to him that two small civilian craft and a light aircraft are unlikely to be able to provide proper enforcement. Is he aware that earlier this year the Argentines carried out an armed attack upon a Taiwanese trawler, resulting in loss of life, and that it is hopeless to try to compare the threat in United Kingdom waters with a threat in the south Atlantic? Will my right hon. and learned Friend look at enforcement again? We need to have the Royal Navy in visible back-up to the civilian craft.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am fully aware of the facts pointed out by my hon. Friend. The attack to which he refers was a matter that I identified as one of the reasons why it was necessary to take the action. What I am saying—it is perfectly plain — is that, for fisheries protection purposes, the resources that I have described should be adequate and are comparable to those that are normally necessary. But, of course, it will be the task of the garrison to continue to deter Argentine aggression and to continue to maintain the integrity of the protection zone, which is substantially co-extensive with the conservation zone.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I think that the decision will be welcomed by both the fishing industry and the Falkland Islands because the waters were being overfished, and without the certainty of limits and help in investment, it is unlikely that the British fishing industry would participate in developing the stocks there. But at the same time is not the Foreign Secretary wrong to place the entire burden of enforcing the regime on the pathetic resources available to the Falkland Islands? Up to now, his argument has been that we should not impose fishing limits because of the certainty that they would be defied and the difficulty of enforcing them. In placing that burden on the Falkland Islands now, is he not really showing the courage of his own lack of convictions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman must understand precisely what the position is. We refrained from taking the action until now because we believed, as I think the whole House would wish us to, that it was better to try to achieve a multilateral regime if possible. We initiated that through the Food and Agricultural Organisation and have been working to that end. Unfortunately, for the reasons that I have given, that has not proved possible, so we are taking this decision to put the unilateral regime in place. I repeat: the regime depends on two components—first, upon the establishment of the normal fisheries protection resources that I have described, and in addition upon the availability around the Falkland Islands, as would be necessary anywhere else, of Her Majesty's armed forces, with the customary task of protecting the integrity of the protection zone and deterring Argentine aggression. It is for those reasons that the forces are on the islands, and for no other purpose.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, if the Argentine Government had negotiated on that point as on other points that he mentioned at Question Time, there would have been no need for us to take the action, and that the only reason why we have had to do so is the refusal by the Argentine Government to negotiate and come to an agreement? In that case, it happens to be the Argentine Government's fault that the Government have had to take the action: their hand has been forced.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am entirely grateful to my hon. Friend. He made precisely the point that I made in my statement. It was for the reason that he gave that we have taken the decision to establish the unilateral regime. I repeat: we should have preferred to achieve a multilateral regime. That remains our long-term preference.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is to be an important debate and a ten-minute Bill after this. I shall allow questions to continue for a further five minutes, and then we must move on.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that we all understand why he has come to the Dispatch Box today—for a bit of electioneering and flag-waving, trying to give the British people the impression that the Government will take on the Argies again without any fishing protection vessels 8,000 miles away? It will not go unnoticed in the coastal and fishery areas of Britain that, while the Tory Government can suggest a 150-mile exclusion zone around the Falklands to protect fish stocks, they cannot do so for British fishermen around here. That will be the response of British fishermen. They will see the measure for what it is worth —a load of hypocrisy.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman speaks for a large number of constituencies, but I have not heard him speak with great credibility on behalf of the fishermen of England. Within the framework of the common fisheries policy, we have established a perfectly effective regime for the protection of British fishing interests in the waters around Britain and around the European Community.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): After waiting so long, would it not have been prudent to wait for a chance to read and study the FAO report? Is not the reality that the Royal Navy has been given an unwelcome burden in the north Atlantic when it is over-stretched? Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that many serious commentators will see that what we have gained in fish stocks we have lost in attempting a realistic long-term policy on the problems of the south Atlantic?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I wish the matter were as simple and benign as my hon. Friend suggest. It is necessary, for the reasons I have outlined and in response to the performance of the Argentine Government, to take action to establish a unilateral regime after a long and patient attempt to establish a multilateral alternative. It would not have been possible to go on waiting for that to emerge from the work of the FAO because the appearance of the first draft of the report is not expected until at least the end of this year. It is important to take action from the beginning of the next fishery season at the beginning of February.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Foreign Secretary aware of the questions that I asked his

Department in July this year about the high mortality rate of rock hopper penguins in the Falkland Islands? One of the reasons advanced for the high mortality rate was over fishing around the Falkland Islands. Was concern for rock hopper penguins considered by the Foreign Secretary when he made his announcement? Can he tell the House what has been discovered by the Government about the cause of death among rock hoppers in the Falklands? Is he not aware that rock hoppers will be grateful to him for his statement today—the live ones, of course?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sorry to have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman, but I must tell him that among the many factors leading us to take the decision, those that were not the most important were his own interests and the impact of puffinosis on penguins in the south Atlantic. Several thousand penguins, out of a population of about 4 million birds, are thought to have died from the effects of a seabird disease known as puffinosis. It is no doubt because of the hon. Gentleman's passionate interest in the subject that I am able to give him the additional information that tests at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food veterinary centre in Norwich showed unusually high concentrations of lead in the birds' tissues. Further research will be undertaken next year. But that interesting information had nothing to do with the motivation of today's decision.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, I was the only member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee to vote in favour of the establishment of the fisheries zone, so I welcome his action. Can he really tell me that he has made no estimate, as he said to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), as to the revenue and the costs to the Falkland Islands? I trust that the revenue exceeds the costs.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is the broad basis on which the matter has been undertaken. Obviously, it is not possible to identify precisely, in advance, what the revenue will be. That depends on the number of licences that are issued. There is an expectation that the costs should be kept as low as possible. The costs should not exceed the licence revenue. It is no doubt on that same prudent premise that my hon. Friend voted so long ago for the measure that we have been wise enough to take today.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Foreign Secretary accept that what he has said so far about the costs of this exercise has been vague in the extreme? What consultations have taken place with the Falkland Islands Government? Has the Foreign Secretary given the Falkland Islands Government a blank cheque that, whatever happens, British conventional troops are at hand?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The decision to proceed to the unilateral regime has been discussed with the Falkland Islands Government, including the cost of implementation and policing, revenue as well as costs, and has led to the expectation that I have identified. The fisheries protection vessels will be the responsibility of the Falkland Islands Government. The defence of the integrity of the Falkland Islands protection zone will remain the responsibility of the forces in place in the Falklands at present.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many of us who talked to Argentine parliamentarians recently in Buenos Aires made the point that the Government's action on Argentina is asserting sovereignty in the matter of Bulgaria and Russian agreements was bound to bring a response? Will he take this opportunity of responding to those Argentine parliamentarians who argue that the exclusion zone and some agreements in future on ending the state of hostilities should be treated as separate matters?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is probably prudent to treat all the various sources of conflict and argument separately from one another, with a view to seeing whether we can resolve any or other of them. I am quite glad to acknowledge that some people in Argentina realise the extent to which the actions of their Government made today's decision inevitable.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): How can we avoid an escalation of this dispute into another cod war?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: By a sensible response on the part of the Argentine Government. If they were willing to respond to the moves that we have been pressing ahead with for some months and agreed to the establishment of a multilateral zone, which we regard as far preferable, there would be no question of such a risk arising.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that, when the fishing licences for far eastern fishing nations are considered, there will be no unfair discrimination against the Taiwanese squid fishermen who have been more diligent in respecting the conservation requirements of the area than many other fishermen from the same part of the world?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that I can begin, at this stage, to draw up policy guidelines in that much detail. I should like to take account of the way in which such behaviour has taken place in the past.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the Government's policy will be seen as an act of aggression by the Soviet Union? Is he aware that the Falkland Islanders will not be able to police those waters; that the Soviet Union, which took out nearly 400,000 tonnes of fish down there last year, will not accept that Britain has the right to impose such restrictions; and that it will drive a coach and horses through the policies that the Government have set on course for a whiting war in the south Atlantic within 12 months? Is that what the Government want?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am aware that this exchange would not have been complete without the addition of the hon. Gentleman's uniquely misguided insight.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): In view of the enormous resources that have been removed from the area over recent years by Eastern bloc, Japanese and Taiwanese fishermen, can my right hon. and learned Friend say whether, because we have the wherewithal to provide the necessary policing that clearly will be required, it will be of any benefit to the British taxpayer?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As to the position of the British taxpayer, as I have said, the responsibility for fisheries protection will be that of the Falkland Islands Government. It is hoped and expected that the cost will not exceed the licence revenue that is forthcoming. The cost of Her Majesty's forces in the neighbourhood remains

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unchanged. They remain available as heretofore to maintain the integrity of the protection zone alongside which the borders of the conservation zone largely will march.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Since the Falklands remains a colony, is parliamentary sanction needed for the changes in Falklands law that this statement implies? Will the Foreign Secretary place in the Library a list of the intrusions into the fishing zone so that we may know exactly what will happen? Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise how warmly one can welcome the evidence that in this case, as in the case of his response to the Hindawi verdict, the smack of firm government is back in fashion in the Foreign Office?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am more than content to acknowledge the tribute paid by my hon. Friend in the spirit in which it was intended. The necessary legislative measures will be introduced in the Falkland islands. Copies of the declaration which underlie this statement have been placed in the Library. I shall consider whether it is possible to provide the additional information my hon. Friend has requested.

Mr. Foulkes: With respect, will the Foreign Secretary now answer the important question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)? Specifically, what discussions took place with representatives of the Soviet Union before this announcement was made? Since the Soviet Union does not accept British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and has concluded a bilateral fishing agreement with Argentina, what does the Foreign Secretary expect will happen if a Soviet Union fishing fleet were to move into the 150-mile zone?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This matter has been raised several times with the Soviet Union. Representatives of the Soviet Union have stated their intention to conduct themselves in a fashion that is not inconsistent with British claims in the area. Doubt about the interpretation and significance of the agreements entered into between the Soviet Union and Argentina and the likely intention of Argentina in that respect have led us to conclude that we need to act unilaterally to achieve the objective on which the whole House is agreed.

Availability for Work (Minister's Statement)

4.12 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It arises from the statement yesterday by the Paymaster General about the availability for work test. In reply to a question by the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis), he informed the House:

"The questionnaire will be used for only new claimants who apply for benefit."—[*Official Report*, 28 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. 183.]

That statement is not correct, as it has become clear that the questionnaire is being applied to a selected group of disabled unemployed claimants and others over 50 years of age who have been unemployed for more than 12 months and are required to report to the Department every three months. More than 100 of those claimants have already been suspended from benefit after application of the questionnaire.

This morning, I contacted the Department of Employment about this matter and was referred to a number of answers to questions which, it was said, informed the House of this policy. Those answers do not inform the House of that policy. Therefore, the House has been misled by the statement. I request the Paymaster General to make a statement to the House to correct it.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I checked what I said to the House yesterday and what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in the other place. I am satisfied that we gave a wholly accurate description of the nationwide scheme we are introducing to improve the tests for availability for work. In a limited number of locations—about six towns—experiments involving quarterly attendance of which we notified the Members of Parliament representing those towns and about which we have answered questions in the House, have been taking place. Those experiments are about to end. They have included the use of this form. We will evaluate those tests. These are part of a number of pilot tests that we run from time to time.

If, in the light of our evaluation, we decide that we want to introduce any further changes to the system, we will come back to the House with them. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the questions asked by my hon. Friends the Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis), by himself and others yesterday and at the answers, I am satisfied he will find that we gave a wholly accurate description.

I had it in mind yesterday that we were taking on 1,400 people at a cost of £14 million. It is actually 1,400 people at a cost of £16 million. I have already written to the hon. Gentleman this morning to correct that. I shall be answering questions on that. Other than that, he is wrong to suggest that I misled the House. Yesterday, I gave a totally full description of the changes that we are making.

No-Smoking Areas in Public Houses

4.15 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require public houses and all other premises licensed for the sale of alcohol to provide a no-smoking area of not less than forty per cent. of the area available to the public.

This small Bill is suitable for the fag-end of a Parliament, one might say. It is encouraging to see the size of the distinguished turnout to welcome it today. Anyone who watched "Yes, Prime Minister" last night will have seen a programme which, in jest but also in all seriousness, showed the difficulty of introducing anti-smoking legislation, bearing in mind vested interests, electoral consequences, loss of taxation revenue and other issues. Nevertheless, we have to take notice of the recent book, "The Big Kill" presented by the Health Education Council of the British Medical Association.

In my constituency, 161 people died last year from smoking-related diseases—heart attacks, lung cancer or emphysema. Smoking was the cause of one in seven deaths. Every day, nine beds in Bassetlaw hospital are occupied predominantly by smokers. This costs the National Health Service well over £500,000 in that constituency. Every year, 200,000 people die from smoking-related diseases.

This small Bill has been introduced because pubs are the last public area of leisure, travel or activity which do not have no-smoking areas for those people who prefer to breathe clean air. In our trains, planes, buses, theatres, London tubes, shops and cinemas, those members of the public who do not want to smoke are well catered for and have the choice of moving from smokers. That does not happen in pubs.

A Department of Health and Social Security survey in June 1973 showed that 79 per cent. of non-smokers would prefer a no-smoking area in restaurants or pubs; 71 per cent. of ex-smokers would prefer such an area; and 43 per cent. of smokers would like non-smokers to be catered for. Yet, of all the pubs I have visited—it must have totalled many over the years—I know of only one, the Fat Cat, in Elmer street, Sheffield, which has a no-smoking room, where there is usually a larger attendance than on the smoking side.

Every summer, thousands of customers sit outside the pub because they prefer to sit in the fresh air rather than in the smoke-filled interior. Customers regularly vote with their feet. They buy their beer at the supermarket and drink it at home rather than put up with pollution in the pub. If a pub customer tries to open a window or keep a door open, as I have done, he quickly finds himself evicted.

This is not an attempt to ban smoking; it is merely a Bill to segregate smokers. *[Interruption.]* It provides for voluntary segregation so that non-smokers have the right to sit in a part of the pub where they can eat their steak and kidney pies and drink their beer without having the air contaminated by nicotine. It is an attempt to make smokers realise that smoking can be as anti-social as spitting used to be, or belching is now, or any of the other unfortunate habits which have, thankfully, died out. A recent MORI poll found that eight out of 10 people agreed that there was a need for a special area at work so that non-smokers could at least get some relief from working with people constantly polluting the atmosphere. Pub staff breathe in smoke all day with no respite.

The Bill is not an attempt to ban smoking. It is an attempt to prod the brewers into providing non-smoking sections in their premises such as those provided by British Rail and British Airways, so that people using these facilities have a choice. At present they have no choice.

There is no legislation that says that there should be no-smoking areas on trains, undergrounds or planes, but once owners of the organisations in such sectors introduce no-smoking area, they quickly become acceptable. I am certain that, if the brewers realised that there is a demand for no-smoking areas in pubs, the last major leisure activity in this country that does not have them would be happy to introduce them voluntarily.

4.20 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The Bill is one of the worst examples of nanny state Socialism for a long time. Its paternalism is surpassed only by the proposals made by the head of Sweden's national welfare board last month for legislation forcing bars to introduce one or two alcohol-free evenings each week. Conservative Members, as they believe in reducing Government regulations and control over industry and individuals, should have no problem in defeating this ridiculous measure.

The Bill is unnecessary. If there is a demand for no-smoking bars, sooner or later market forces will satisfy such a demand. Examples such as The Lamb in the City of London, or the Maltman in Glasgow prove that legislation is unnecessary and, as the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) has conceded, there is no legislation that requires British Rail or British Airways to create separate smoking and no-smoking zones. Secondly, more pubs are installing sophisticated air cleaning systems that remove 99 per cent. of tobacco smoke and indoor pollutants. One manufacturer provides pubs with "clean air pub" stickers for those establishments that install such air cleaners, and the solution is surely ventilation and not legislation.

The hon. Member's proposal would be unpopular as well as unnecessary. He quoted a MORI poll, and I shall quote a Harris poll which shows that only 18 per cent. of a sample believe that the subject of the Bill should be a matter for central Government. It is unnecessary and unpopular, and could be unworkable. Would we have smoking prevention officers, presumably paid at tax-payers' expense?

The main case for restricting smoking in public places—passive smoking—now appears to be unfounded, as a research paper published in the Cancer Research Campaign's journal this summer said. The cancer researchers concluded:

"Our findings appear consistent with the general view, based on all the available evidence, that any effect of passive smoking on risk of lung cancer or other smoking associated diseases is at most quite small, if it exists at all."

Commenting on the controversy that this article aroused, the epidemiologists Professor Doll and Professor Peto described the evidence as "equivocal", the risks as "trivial" and the passive smoking case for further restriction on smoking in public places as a "matter of personal opinion". Anti-smoking campaigners have rallied support for the Bill because it provides them with yet another opportunity to make the nation's 17 million smokers feel guilty and defensive about their habit.

Parliament should tell these people that smoking, like eating and drinking, are matters of personal life style and

[Mr. Michael Brown]

it would be almost as offensive to introduce legislation compelling pub landlords to provide smoking areas as it is to enforce no-smoking areas. The hon. Member and his colleagues were quick to reprimand my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security for telling people in the north what to do. The hon. Member and his colleagues will have to answer more to the people in the north for what he is trying to impose on them than anything that my hon. Friend has done. I ask the House to oppose the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 98, Noes 90.

Division No. 301] **[4.24 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, J.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Kennedy, Charles
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lamond, James
Latham, Michael
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McNamara, Kevin
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Maxton, John
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
O'Brien, William
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wainwright, R.
Wareing, Robert
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse and
Mr. Roland Boyes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Blackburn, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Chapman, Sydney
Cockeram, Eric
Crowther, Stan
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forrester, John
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McQuarrie, Albert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Ottaway, Richard
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Watts, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Rob Hayward and
Mr. Eric Forth.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Michael Foot, Mr. Frank Dobson, Dr. M. S. Miller, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Greg Knight, Mr. Jerry Hayes and Mr. Andrew MacKay.

No-Smoking Areas in Public Houses

Mr. Joe Aston accordingly presented a Bill to require public houses and all other premises licensed for the sale of alcohol to provide a no-smoking area of not less than forty per cent. of the area available to the public: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday and to be printed. [Bill 225.]

Westland plc

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State for Defence I must announce that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in this important debate, including no fewer than seven Privy Councillors. I therefore propose to apply the 10 minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm.

4.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): The trigger for our debate today is, of course, the Government's reply, published in one Command Paper, to the third and fourth reports from the Select Committee on Defence. I will come back to the fourth report, but I propose to concentrate first on the third report and that part of the Government's reply which dealt with the matters discussed in the third report. The third report takes as its subject a matter with which we should all be deeply concerned—the defence implications of the future of Westland.

The House is indebted to my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) and his Committee for a clear and cogent exposition of the defence issues, based on wide and deep research. As Cmnd. 9916 makes clear, the Government agree with much of the Committee's analysis. Inevitably there are points on which we cannot go the whole way with the Committee, but this does not prevent us from recognising the report as a major contribution to thinking on the subject, and one which is already proving valuable in helping us to form our own views.

The Committee rightly points out that the helicopter has an established place in both maritime and land and air warfare, and that its existing range of capabilities is gradually being extended. Both the existing roles and their extension were vividly demonstrated during the Falklands conflict and its aftermath, when helicopters were not only employed for anti-submarine warfare, amphibious assault, reconnaissance and surveillance, rapid movement of troops about the battlefield, re-supply and evacuation of casualties, but were adapted at short notice to remedy our lack of airborne early warning. At the same time, the helicopter has its vulnerabilities—to air defence systems, direct fire, attack by other helicopters and so forth. As the Committee has observed, the helicopter is not yet able to replace an entire capability in the land-air battle. For example, attack helicopters must complement ground-based, long-range direct-fire weapons rather than replacing them.

The problem for defence planners, and for Ministers, is therefore to define their place within a programme of balanced capabilities, and also, equally important, within the constraints of availability of funds. Against this background, I believe that the Committee's comment that quantity has been sacrificed for quality is a little severe.

It is true that numerically the three services' holdings of helicopters are a little lower than a decade ago—some 850 in total compared with 940 in 1975—but the reduction is not large, and the overall capability has actually increased through acquisition by all three services of new and more powerful types, for example, the Navy's anti-submarine Lynx, with its greatly increased range and torpedo-carrying capability compared with its predecessor the Wasp; the Army's Lynx, armed with Tow missiles, and carrying a much greater clout in the anti-tank role than the Scout which it replaced; and the RAF's Chinook, each of which can carry 55 fully equipped troops—and indeed carried more in the Falklands. I believe that the record shows us to have given the helicopter a very good priority in the defence programme and to have built up our capability in this key arm of warfare.

Furthermore, improved types of helicopter feature prominently in our future programme. The new anti-submarine helicopter, the Anglo-Italian EH101, is a high priority project to which we are firmly committed. Its higher payload will enable it to operate effectively at the very long ranges necessary to deal with hostile submarines equipped with stand-off weapons and sophisticated defences. It will thus exploit to the full the improved sensors and weapons that will be in service in the next decade, and thereby will enhance the protection given to allied shipping.

Westland and its partner, Agusta, plan to develop three versions of the helicopter—naval, passenger and utility—so as to enable the development costs to be spread over larger sales, thereby increasing value for money.

Our second requirement is for a new light attack helicopter in the anti-tank role to replace Lynx fitted with Tow. Entry into service is planned for the late 1990s and the programme is thus at a somewhat earlier stage than EH101. Nevertheless, good progress is being made.

Together with our partners—Italy, the Netherlands and Spain—we have recently signed two memoranda of understanding: one laying down the framework for collaboration on the Agusta A129 light attack helicopter and the other covering a joint feasibility and cost definition study, which is expected to start shortly and take two years to complete. I hope and expect that this project, too, will come to fruition in due course.

The most difficult issue facing my Department concerns support helicopters. The RAF operates the Wessex and the Puma in this role, as well as the Chinook. Within the next 10 years both Wessex and Puma will be approaching the end of their cost-effective lives as they become progressively more expensive to operate.

There is no absolute cut-off date: given the necessary overhaul and updating most helicopters can be kept going for a long time—and the timing of any successor system is therefore, to some extent, a matter of discretion. There is also a major prior question: for what range of tasks do we want to use support helicopters? Only when we have answered that question can we go on to decide what kinds of helicopters we need, and how many of them.

The Committee has commented that the delay in formulating the support requirement has exacerbated the problems faced by Westland as the only British helicopter manufacturer. I am aware that there has been some criticism of our decision early last year to leave decisions on air staff target 404 in abeyance, and I should like to put this matter into perspective. A staff target is no more than a broad statement of the functions and desired performance of a new piece of equipment, made before the feasibility or method of meeting such a need have been assessed. It is in no sense a fully defined requirement.

This particular staff target dates back to 1978, and it came into particular prominence in 1980 when my Department, very sensibly, considered whether a common

[Mr. George Younger]

helicopter could be found to carry out both the anti-submarine and the support tasks. The conclusion then was that this was undersirable, and EH101 went ahead as a separate programme.

Meanwhile, it remained fully open to the Ministry of Defence to reassess the military requirement if new evidence came along to warrant it. This is precisely what happened. The experience of Exercise Lionheart in the autumn of 1984, and the new thinking it stimulated about the army's helicopter needs, are well described in the Committee's report—[*Interruption.*] I would just say to the Opposition that the Select Committee spent a great deal of time and energy on this study. Those hon. Members who devoted so much time to it will take considerable exception to its being treated with such levity.

It was therefore necessary for the defence staff to go back to the drawing board and to undertake a fundamental study to review the military requirement for support helicopters. This study is looking a long way ahead—in fact as far as the year 2010. It is considering what changes in support helicopter roles and capabilities can be expected up to that date, how support helicopter assets can be used most effectively to fulfil these roles and, in the light of this, what the best force mix would be. On the basis of this, a force mix is to be recommended.

As the Select Committee has recognised, these issues are bound up with the question of the army's air mobility needs. We have noted carefully the Committee's preliminary view that there is a very good case for fulfilling a fully air mobile brigade, and this is being borne in mind in our studies.

The Committee has stressed the importance of resolving these matters quickly. Certainly I accept that. We shall continue to work as rapidly as possible on the military issues and on their consequences for procurement and for the defence programme. A key aspect of this is affordability.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend has put clearly before the House the military issues that are at stake and the decisions to be made about when and what type of new light support helicopter will be required. Is it not a fact, however, that work is needed now at Westland because the EH101 programme cannot fill the available capacity at the Westland plants?

Mr. Younger: I am keenly aware of that point, and my hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to it. I assure him that I shall be dealing with that later in my speech. As I have already said, a key aspect of this is affordability. One cannot state military requirements in a financial vacuum, and resources are tight. I cannot at this stage forecast what our decisions will be or what their consequences may be for Westland, but I recognise the need to resolve this as quickly as possible and I can tell the House that the decision on the future needs of the services in this area will be taken in the new year.

Meanwhile, I very much welcome the Committee's commendation of our decision to carry out a fundamental reappraisal of our requirements before committing ourselves to procurement. I think the House will recognise that we would have been failing in our duty if we had fudged the difficult and complex judgments about military needs in order to rush to procurement of hardware at any cost. This would have been fair neither to the services nor to the taxpayer.

The Committee has also raised the question of service responsibilities for helicopters and has said that it believes there is a strong case for giving the Army, as user of support helicopters, full responsibility for them. I think that the Committee has raised an interesting question.—*[Interruption.]* The House may wish to know what it is.

Most NATO nations assign responsibility for operating all battlefield helicopters to their army, but Canada and Norway do so to their air force. We have a split system, with the Army operating smaller and lighter helicopters and the RAF the bigger and heavier ones. It would be wrong to underestimate the upheaval that would be caused by going down the road the Committee has suggested. Major changes would be necessary in the training, manning and support organisations and in the plans of the two services concerned, and it remains to be seen whether the demands of the modern and more mobile battlefield require a fundamental change in existing arrangements.

Moreover, while it would be wrong to become complacent, I should point out that the Falklands campaign demonstrated the ability of all three services to work effectively in integrated operations. Under the revised organisation of the Ministry of Defence, established by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), all operational requirements are considered centrally, which has removed the risk of capabilities which cross service boundaries not being given their rightful priority.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Secretary of State understand that one of the issues in this debate is the integrity of the Prime Minister? Does he intend to deal with HC 519, because, apart from the defence issue, the lying, cheating and dishonesty which undoubtedly go on are most important?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman should mind his language. He might also care to consult an ear, nose and throat specialist, because I have already said that I intend to cover both reports. I hope he will accept that that is the right way to deal with this.

Before embarking on any change in ownership of helicopters, I would need to be fully satisfied that any benefits would justify the considerable upheaval and could not be secured by simpler means; for example, by some change in command and control arrangements. Nevertheless, the Government are considering the matter and we will bear the Committee's views very much in mind. Naturally, much of the Committee's third report deals with current helicopter projects and future helicopter requirments, but the Committee also addressed the defence industrial base and Westland's place in it.

The Ministry of Defence is the largest single customer of British industry. Defence procurement accounts for about half the output of the aerospace industry. In this and other sectors the Ministry sustains through the work of the research and development establishments and extra-mural R and D contracts much of the industry's R and D base. In terms of employees, Westland is a relatively small company compared with the giants of the defence industry such as GEC and BAe, but it is the only domestic source of helicopters, and as a result it is one of the relatively few companies to which the Ministry of Defence pays more

than £100 million per annum. Indeed, MOD payments currently run at between £150 million and £200 million per annum. Thus, there always has been, and continues to be, a close relationship between the MOD and Westland.

Westland is more than a helicopter company. Upwards of 40 per cent. of its turnover arises from the aerospace and technologies divisions, which are successful and competitive. The smaller of the two, the aerospace division, is now the largest employer in Cowes on the Isle of Wight, and its aerostructures and hovercraft business is expanding. The technologies division is rather larger and comparable in turnover to each of the two helicopter divisions. It is very successful in areas such as environmental control and life support systems, filtration and heat transfer. It is a significant sub-contractor to the Tornado programme, providing valves, tanks, undercarriage components and many other items. It is also very successful in the civil and export field and is a supplier to airbus and the U.S. B1 bombers and F18 fighters. The technologies division represents the ideal defence supplier. It is successful, innovative and profitable, but not wholly dependent on the MOD for orders, having achieved wide civil and foreign military sales.

These two divisions and the helicopter customer support division help to make Westland what it is now, a sound company, and I know that the management believes that it is better placed than it has been for some time. It is, of course, the helicopter division at Yeovil for which it is better known. This division has been successful in supplying the MOD for many years with most of its helicopter requirements and in supporting the MOD helicopter fleet. The core of Westland's future helicopter business rests on the Anglo-Italian EH101 helicopter, which will be widely deployed in the Royal Navy in the 1990s.

As I have said, Westland is also involved in preliminary work on the four-nation light attack helicopter for the late 1990s based upon the development of the Italian A129 helicopter. I am glad to say that Westland's collaboration with its European partners has not been affected by the involvement with Sikorsky and Fiat. In addition, the company is taking part in some major technological developments. Here it has a world lead, as was shown by its recent success in recovering from the Soviet Union the world helicopter speed record and breaking the 200 knot barrier. It has also sold in the civil market and has had export successes.

We wish Westland well in its closer association with Sikorsky and Fiat and hope that it achieves early export orders for its full product range of Sea King, Lynx, Black Hawk and EH101 helicopters. The Government will, of course, give the company every assistance for its exports, just as we give every assistance to other aerospace manufacturers.

The Committee drew attention to the national security issues that can arise as a result of foreign investment in United Kingdom defence suppliers. This is not a new issue. We welcome foreign investment in Britain's industries—whether they be defence or civil suppliers—and this has been the case for many years. Where national interests are at stake and there is the possibility of controlling interests arising, powers are available under existing legislation. Of more immediate concern is the protection of classified information and technology. I can assure the House that there are well established procedures and practices to protect such information and technology in our defence industries, just as there are in defence establishments. I cannot, of course, go into detail, but we take many factors into account. In the case of Westland, as we would with any other firm where there has been a significant change in foreign involvement, the protection of classified matters has been positively confirmed.

The Committee rightly drew attention to the defence industrial base and Westland's position in it. The Government's position was well expressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 15 January, when she said that the Government's concern was to see a financial reconstruction of Westland as soon as possible which maintained a British helicopter, design, development and manufacturing capability, supported United Kingdom participation in collaboration with NATO allies and safeguarded the interests of the company, its employees and shareholders.

We are pleased that a financial reconstruction came about which has put the company on a sounder financial footing and that a British helicopter capability has been maintained which can support the MOD fleet, meet current orders for Lynx and Sea King helicopters and participate in the collaborative projects that I have mentioned.

The Government and Westland have a long and successful history of working together. I know and accept that Westland needs a clearer indication of the Government's intentions against which the company can plan its future and, as I have said, decisions on the future support helicopter needs of the services will be taken in the new year. The third report from the Select Committee on Defence has proved valuable in taking forward our views on these and other matters, and we are grateful to the Committee for the work that it has done.

I now turn to the Committee's fourth report on the Government's decision making and to that part of the Government's reply which dealt with this report.

The fourth report gives the House a complex and detailed narrative of events, not only on the days and weeks immediately preceding and succeeding the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter on 6 January, but indeed for some months before that. The Committee's examination of these events is entirely in accordance with the Government's acknowledgement of the competence of departmental Select Committees to consider the issues raised by subjects such as Westland.

I have no doubt that hon. Members will have their own points to make on particular aspects of this report. On the bulk of it, I refer the House to paragraph 28 of the Government's reply to the fourth report. It says:

> "Full accounts of the matters with which the Fourth Report is concerned have already been given by Ministers in statements in Parliament, speeches in debates and Answers to Parliamentary Questions, and by the Head of the Home Civil Service in his evidence to the Committee."

The report also deals with a number of general issues arising out of the relationship between the Executive and Select Committees.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Did the Prime Minister have any knowledge before 6 January?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is clearly spelt out and the Committee made its opinion on it quite clear. It is up to us today to comment on the unanimous conclusion of the Select Committee.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, in winding up this debate, is far better placed than I am to

[Mr. Younger]

deal with the general questions arising out of the relationship between the Executive and Select Committees. I propose to leave all that aspect to him.

There is, however, one issue of constitutional practice on which I should like to end. This is the principle of collective ministerial responsibility. The so-called Westland affair powerfully reinforces the wisdom of successive Administrations in generally abiding by the rule of collective responsibility. That message, underlined by the unhappiness of two ministerial resignations, will long be remembered when so much else in our current political controversy has faded.

As for the future, I am glad that Westland is now on a sounder financial footing. The Government fully recognise that Westland provides a capability which remains important to the Ministry of Defence and that we have a substantial part to play in the company's future. I hope that when we have completed the firm assessment of our requirements which I have mentioned we can together plan constructively for the way forward into the 1990s.

It is, as I have said, far from the case that Westland's links with partners in Europe have suffered as a result of its involvement with Sikorsky and Fiat: on the contrary, its links with firms on both sides of the Atlantic are in excellent shape. The work of the Select Committee on both these matters should be warmly commended by the House.

5.1 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The Secretary of State has dealt fully with the question of helicopters and their role in the armed forces. I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not follow him in the detailed arguments which he put forward.

As the Secretary of State said, we are debating the response of the Government to the third and fourth reports of the inquiries by the Select Committee on Defence, both into the Westland company and into the Government's decision-making process as it related to that company. The third report is about the future of the helicopter industry, the role of helicopters in the armed forces, and the future of our defence industrial base. The fourth report is about the battle for Westland, which commenced with Sikorsky's attempt to acquire a minority interest, and ended with the leaking by the Government of the legal opinion of Her Majesty's Solicitor-General. As the House well knows, it was a battle which led to the resignation of two Cabinet Ministers, which called into question the Prime Minister's integrity, and as the Government's response to the fourth report shows, a battle which could have far-reaching consequences for Select Committees, not only those set up by the Government in 1979 but also long-established Select Committees such as the Public Accounts Committee.

The responsibility for the damage that was done and for the drama lies with the Government and especially with the Prime Minister. The right hon. Lady cannot blame anyone else, not the Labour party, the trade unions, the Russians or even the BBC. In this case the enemy really was the enemy within. The root cause of both the industrial and constitutional problems which arose over Westland lay in the fact that the Government, and especially the Prime Minister, have constantly placed ideological belief ahead of state or national interest. The delicate balance between ideology and national interest, which all other Governments since the war have sought to maintain, has been undermined by the Government. That has had a damaging effect both on industrial policy and on the conventions of the constitution.

In the Westland affair the Government—in reality, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—failed, and indeed refused, to recognise that our defence interests and, perhaps to a greater extent our defence industrial base cannot be safeguarded and secured by the laws of the market place and cannot be determined by the interests of shareholders.

The Department of Trade and Industry failed to understand that in the production of more and more sophisticated military equipment, the choice for Britain, whether we like it or not, will often be to join in collaborative projects with western Europe, to produce under licence, or to buy off the shelf from the Americans. Because of the size and power of the American armaments industry, the American alternative would lead ultimately to the destruction of our industrial base and our manufacturing skills.

As the Select Committee points out, 72 per cent. of all the military helicopters in use in the countries of the West have been manufactured in the United States. Without collaborative ventures within western Europe, and without a measure of state protection, the whole of western Europe's helicopter industry could be wiped out in a very short time.

The Government's simplistic and short-term view was put clearly by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) in his evidence to the Select Committee. In paragraph 167 of the third report, the right hon. and learned Gentleman defined the defence interest as being to

"secure helicopters of the right kind at a reasonable price from a reliable source".

For "helicopters" one could substitute fighter aircraft, frigates or tanks, all of which could probably be bought from the United States or manufactured under licence. The price might well be lower to the Ministry of Defence, but the cost would be higher—for the social security budget, for the balance of payments and for our depreciating and declining manufacturing industry. If those words were strictly and literally applied, there would have been no Tornado project, with a consequent massive loss of jobs and technology, and there would be no British participation in the European fighter aircraft, with similar consequences for British industry.

Despite all the traumas and convulsions relating to Westland over the past year, and despite the Government's belief in shareholder power, as the Secretary of State conceded, the underlying problems of the Westland helicopter business and of the future of 8,000 jobs are no nearer a solution. There is little prospect of orders for the new EH101 helicopter until perhaps the end of the decade, leaving Westland desperately short of orders in the meantime. The defence budget has no money to buy helicopters; the Government, and especially the Army, still have not decided what role they see for battlefield and support helicopters. Those problems cannot be solved by shareholders; they are matters for the Government.

Let me deal now with the fourth report of the Select Committee and the Government's response to it, and in particular the leaking of the Solicitor-General's legal opinion and the subsequent inquiry by the head of the Civil Service into that leaking.

It may be said that ultimately, eventually, the constitutional proprieties were discharged. However, a Minister resigned on account of his own misdeeds and those of his civil servants. Apparently, that was sufficient to lay the ghost of Sir Thomas Dugdale. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks took all the blame and resigned. No one else did—not the Prime Minister, nor the civil servants at the Department of Trade and Industry, nor those at No. 10, all of whom had been, I believe, part of a conspiracy to subvert some of the conventions of the constitution.

Lest future historians are tempted to write up the resignation of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks as an example of high principle and devotion to the constitution, I must say that it did not seem like that at the time. The right hon. and learned Gentleman had finally admitted that he had authorised the leaking of a confidential document which was covered by the Official Secrets Act and was the legal opinion of the Solicitor-General. Yet we certainly did not get the impression that the Prime Minister was very angry about that reprehensible and unconstitutional act.

I do not recollect that the Prime Minister summoned the right hon. and learned Gentleman to the Cabinet room and read out to him chunks of the collected works of Walter Bagehot on the constitution. I doubt very much whether the right hon. Lady keeps a copy of the collected works of Mr. Bagehot. Indeed, far from showing anger at the unconstitutional action of her Secretary of State, the right hon. Lady did her utmost to dissuade him from resigning and hoped that he would soon return to high office.

The Prime Minister could not admit that the Secretary of State had done wrong because if he had done wrong she had also done wrong because she was his partner—his senior partner, indeed—in that wrongdoing. She had used the Secretary of State just as she used the Solicitor-General, just as she duped the Attorney-General and just as she used the Civil Service—and all, it seems, because the right hon. Lady had a temper tantrum owing to the activities of the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine).

Statements, questions and speeches in the House with regard to the letter that was leaked have tended to concentrate on the events of Monday 6 January. I notice that the Secretary of State, in the few minutes that he spent on the fourth report and the Government's reply to it, also concentrated on that day. That was the day when civil servants at the Department of Trade and Industry and Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell at number 10 went through the mechanics of leaking the Solicitor-General's letter, but that was the execution of the plot. The plot had been hatched before then, and it was the Prime Minister herself, I am sorry to say, who put the ingredients together for that plot.

The plot started, as is clear from the Select Committee report, on the morning of Saturday 4 January. The Prime Minister, no doubt in high dudgeon at the conduct of the Secretary of State for Defence, told the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to get in touch with the Solicitor-General about possible inaccuracies in a letter written by the Secretary of State for Defence to the merchant bank which was advising the European consortium. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, being a loyal member of the Cabinet, did as he was told and telephoned the Solicitor-General on that very Saturday morning.

The devotion to duty of Ministers and civil servants on that weekend was impressive. Everyone was on parade, it seems—the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and his officials, the Prime Minister and her officials, the Solicitor-General and his officials and, of course, during those days the Secretary of State for Defence was never far from a telephone.

After the call from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Solicitor-General started to beaver away and by 7 pm on Saturday evening he had produced what is described as a provisional oral opinion. The speed with which that provisional opinion came out was impressive. It certainly gives the lie to all those scurrilous people who accuse lawyers of being slow. But then, the orders had come from on high.

I am bound to say that it is surprising that the only evidence which the Solicitor-General took before coming to his opinion was, so far as I could see from reading the reports, from one of the prosecutors—the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The accused, the Secretary of State for Defence, was not asked to give evidence. He was just told about it on the telephone a few hours later. Late on that Saturday evening, he was told that he had provisionally been found guilty.

The Secretary of State for Defence did not seem very bothered. He replied saying that he had evidence in the Ministry of Defence to clear his name. But the Solicitor-General never called for it although there was plenty of time. The whole of Whitehall were at their desks and the whole of Sunday lay ahead. But no doubt the Solicitor-General had his reasons.

By about 7 o'clock on that Saturday evening, No. 10 had been told, so we understand, that a provisional opinion had found the Secretary of State for Defence guilty. When that was communicated back to the ranch excitement started to mount. It was still Saturday evening, but once the Prime Minister was informed of the provisional guilt of the Secretary of State, her immediate reaction—I quote from her speech to the House on 27 January—was:

> "The matter clearly could not be left there. I therefore, through my office, asked him"—

the Solicitor-General—

> "to consider writing to the Defence Secretary to draw that opinion to his attention." —[*Official Report*, 27 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 652.]

In other words, "Tell Mayhew to put it in writing." That, of course, is what the Solicitor-General did.

Things now were moving along nicely. Her Majesty's Solicitor-General had pronounced the Secretary of State for Defence guilty and there was a 99 per cent. certainty that a copy of that opinion in the form of a letter would be in No. 10 some time during the morning of Monday 6 January. All that was left to be done was to ensure that the letter got into the public domain—a curious phrase—and then it would be, "Gotcha, Heseltine."

What happened next? The Prime Minister was desperate to get the letter into the public domain. She admitted that in her statement on 23 January when she said:

> "it was urgent that it should become public knowledge before 4 pm that afternoon".

That was the Monday when the Westland board was to meet. Later in her statement on 23 January, in answer to her hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), the Prime Minister said:

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

"It was to get that accurate information to the public domain that I gave my consent." — [*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 450-55.]

So the Prime Minister was keen that weekend to get the letter into the public domain.

Are we now asked to believe that, after the Prime Minister asked the Solicitor-General on Saturday evening to write a letter, nothing then happened—that the Prime Minister suddenly collapsed in a heap muttering faintly to herself the words, "public domain"? Are we asked to believe that nothing else was said or done until — surprise, surprise—some time on the Monday morning an ancient retainer from the Solicitor-General's office turns up on the steps of No. 10 with a piece of paper with a pretty pink tape around it, the Solicitor-General's opinion?

Then, suddenly, apparently with magical and telepathic powers, the civil servants of No. 10 and the civil servants at the Department of Trade and Industry got together and leaked the Solicitor-General's letter. The Prime Minister willed the ends; the means, of course, could be left to her civil servants. It was impossible for the means to be other than unconstitutional. I do not understand how the Solicitor-General's legal opinion could, by constitutional means, have been put into the public domain. The conventions are clear and I should be astonished if the Prime Minister, with her legal experience and her experience of Parliament, and the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks with his experience of the law and of Parliament, did not know very well the conventions regarding the legal opinions of Law Officers.

A Law Officer's opinion cannot be made public without his or her consent. No consent was sought. In any case, consent can be given only in what are termed exceptional circumstances. Those were not the sort of exceptional circumstances when a Law Officer's legal opinion should be made public. Even if the circumstances were exceptional and consent had been given, the publication of the Law Officer's opinion must be to Parliament, certainly not to the parliamentary Press Association. By willing the ends, the Prime Minister and her Secretary of State for Trade and Industry willed the unconstitutional means.

After that, events moved very fast. Mr. Bernard Ingham told Miss Colette Bowe to lock up her scruples and call for Mr. Christopher Moncreiff, that well-respected purveyor of news to the public domain. Of course, he did his job and the Prime Minister got the headlines she wanted. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry resigned, but the Prime Minister is still toughing it out. If the Prime Minister's civil servants were not acting on her orders, they should be punished. If they were, the Prime Minister should be punished. If the Secretary of State did wrong, as he did, the Prime Minister also did wrong and her punishment should have been no different from his.

The Law Officers were naturally furious at the way in which they had been used and the Attorney-General forced an inquiry, which was conducted by Sir Robert Armstrong. It was clear from the report of the Select Committee on Defence that the head of the Civil Service was only going through the motions. He knew what had happened, as did the Prime Minister. He certainly knew enough not to ask the two principal Ministers, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, to give evidence. That would have been more than his job was worth. He knew enough not to make any inquiries in any of the other Departments involved, because the letter was copied to the Ministry of Defence, the Treasury and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Sir Robert Armstrong knew enough not even to ask any questions in those Departments. Immediately, he drew up his own list of suspects, and they were the five civil servants at the Department of Trade and Industry and No. 10.

In doing that, the head of the Civil Service showed extraordinary detective skills—skills which would have ensured that he received the highest medal of the Sherlock Holmes Society. Of course, the head of the Civil Service knew very well, as did the Prime Minister and everyone else, that the inquiry was a charade and a farce.

What happened next was predictable. The unfortunate Colette Bowe pleaded the defence of superior orders and was granted immunity from prosecution. The other officials faced no disciplinary action whatsoever and their careers are prospering. It is impossible not to make the contrast with the case of poor Sarah Tisdall, who spent six months in Holloway—but she was only a junior clerk.

The Prime Minister no doubt thinks that she has got away with it, but she has not. The jury is still out. When it returns on election night, and when all the other offences have been taken into account, the Opposition have no doubt what the verdict will be on the Prime Minister and her Government.

5.25 pm

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): According to the clock on the wall, the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has spoken for 23 minutes on a matter of some interest to the House, but despite the fact that he is still the Opposition spokesman on defence he spent only six of those minutes talking about the defence implications of Westland plc. I understand the reason for that. No doubt if the right hon. Gentleman had talked for longer than six minutes about helicopters, he would have had to start on the uphill task of explaining the Labour party's defence policy. It is no wonder that he shied away from that. The right hon. Gentleman took his lead from television, radio and most of the papers, where there has been barely any mention of the defence implications of Westland plc, but much discussion of the fourth report of the Select Committee on Defence. That was done no doubt because it was considered to be more sensational and stood a better chance of improving ratings. The right hon. Gentleman was of the same opinion.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence was good enough to say that the third report of the Select Committee on Defence was valuable and interesting. I am glad that he devoted much of his speech to it. For those of us who care about and are interested in Britain's future safety and the future of British undertakings, technology and skill, that is the most important report.

The House will remember that the Select Committee started its inquiry into the defence implications of the future of Westland plc before Christmas last year. The company's future, and whether it had a future at all, had for many weeks been very much in the balance. Its outlook at that time was, to say the least, obscure. The then Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), was not the

sponsoring Minister, but he was Westland's main customer and he would have been the Minister most affected if the company crashed.

On 18 December 1985, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley was asked to give evidence to the Select Committee on Defence about what was going on in the company and about its future. All his evidence and all the subsequent evidence given to the Committee was published and is before the House. There are more than 420 pages of it. I shall not go through it, but I shall make one comment on it. My right hon. Friend's main anxiety, which emerged from his evidence to the Select Committee on Defence and in his subsequent actions, was that the financial link-up between Westland plc and United Technologies Corporation and Fiat, which was supported by the directors and which was about to be put to the shareholders and was finally approved by them, would jeopardise relations between Westland plc and other European helicopter manufacturing companies and would damage the prospects of collaboration on joint projects.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley said to us, in terms, that he believed that the EH101 project could continue, but that the NH90 and light attack helicopter projects would not. Only a year has passed since he said that, but events so far have shown that he was wrong. The Government's policy that the Westland shareholders should decide their future was followed. They decided to link their company with United Technologies Corporation and Fiat, and all three collaborative projects with other European helicopter manufacturers are going ahead unhindered. From a defence point of view, that is excellent news.

Furthermore, the company's affairs seem to be in much better shape than they were a year ago. Westland has a restored capital base, and no net borrowing. It has strong international partners, with one of whom it has been working closely for more than 40 years. Over the first half of this year, Westland's profit performance has been markedly better than for the corresponding period last year, and in all, it continues to employ well over 10,000 people. It must be noted that that turnaround has been achieved without a penny of taxpayers' money. That must be a cause of satisfaction to hon. Members on both sides of the House. Of course there are problems ahead, just as there are for any business. Some, if not all of them, arise because the Ministry of Defence is by far the largest customer of Westland and the company's life or death virtually depends on what it does or does not do.

That leads me straight on to the first point about our third report. It was well known for some years that Westland was in trouble. Some of its difficulties had nothing to do with the Government, such as the company's decision to try to expand into a rapidly contracting civil market. But the Government's action—or, to be more accurate, inaction — in one area did nothing to ease the company's problems. I refer to the Government's inability to make up their mind about what they needed by way of a light support helicopter as a successor to the Puma and the Wessex, which is now 30 years old. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State devoted part of his speech to the famous, or infamous, air staff target 404, which was endorsed, as he said, in 1978.

A broad based feasibility study was undertaken. The possibility of European collaboration was considered. Two further studies were commissioned and completed, yet in December 1985 my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley told us in evidence that he lacked "clear military advice" about what was wanted. Of course, by that time air staff target 404 had been withdrawn. That length of delay — eight years now — by Westland's principal customer can only have added to Westland's difficulties. I think that the House will therefore understand why, in paragraph 67 of the third report, the Committee said:

"These matters must be resolved quickly."

In paragraph 68 of our report, we noted the evidence given to us by the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), that he hoped that Ministers would be able to take a firm view of their requirements for support helicopters by the end of this year. I hope so too. Eight years should surely be long enough to reach some conclusion.

Paragraph 8 of the Government's response says that the Government accept that a decision must be reached quickly but it does not specifically repeat the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames, which I just quoted. It is clear that, if there is much more delay, there is a real risk that in two or three years' time this country's only helicopter-manufacturing company will once again be in severe difficulties. We shall be faced with these problems all over again.

It is only fair that I should give the Government notice that the Defence Committee will return to this matter when, at the latest, we examine the statement on the Defence Estimates next year.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, as he has drawn attention to the need for an early decision. Does he not also feel somewhat depressed, if not dissatisfied, because the Secretary of State clearly implied that that decision would not be made in the autumn, as the Select Committee recommended, and would be left until, I think he said, some time early next year?

Sir Humphrey Atkins: It is our business to keep up the pressure on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and, as I have just implied, I propose to do so.

My other point about the third report involves the ownership and control of defence contractors. We examined in some detail two important questions. One of them involved the restrictions which prevent control of a company passing outside the United Kingdom. Indeed, the House will no doubt remember that the Libyan Government were involved in the UTC-Fiat proposal. The other question involved the anonymity of a purchaser of shares.

The Government's response, in paragraphs 22 to 24, deals with one of those questions, but not with the other. We are told that the powers available to the Government under the Fair Trading Act 1973, the Industry Act 1975 and the Companies Act 1975 are sufficient to prevent a foreign buyer from acquiring not just control but even material influence over a defence contractor. That is all well and good, but it does not deal with the question of anonymous or mystery shareholders.

The House will remember that on 12 February 1986, at the emergency general meeting of the shareholders of Westland at which the company's future was decided, there were six such shareholders, who between them owned one fifth of the shares. That is what led our Committee to say, in paragraph 143 of our third report:

[Sir Humphrey Atkins]

"The Government cannot know that there is a need to exercise that power without knowing when the effective control of a company is a matter of concern."

In this context, of course, we mean national concern. In paragraph 144, we went on to say:

"It is, therefore, the responsibility of Government to satisfy itself that the ownership of shares in defence contractors of national importance has no implications for national security."

In other words, the Government should not wait to be told that something undesirable may be going on, but should monitor the situation so that they know at once and can, if it seems necessary, use their powers to prevent it. That point is not addressed in the Government's response. I hope that that does not mean that it will not be, because, although I recognise that the subject may fall more within the ambit of the Trade and Industry Committee, where defence contractors are concerned, it is clearly of great importance to our Committee and, as we have said in the report, we plan to return to it.

I turn to our fourth report. An enormous amount has been said and written about the matters contained in the report, and no doubt a lot more will be said by some hon. Members tonight. I do not regard it as my business to elaborate on that report in what I have to say to the House. I shall give the reason. Our Committee examined the matters covered in the report in great detail over many weeks. We took a large amount of evidence, which has been published and which anyone may read. We considered that evidence and have said what we make of it in our report, which contains 240 paragraphs.

None of us—I know that I can speak for all my colleagues on the Committee—wishes to add anything to what we have written or to subtract anything. To the best of our ability we have sought to fulfil the task laid upon us by the Standing Orders of the House, which in this case were reinforced by a resolution of the House on 15 January 1986. How well we have done our job is for the House, and not for us, to judge. Hon. Members will no doubt say exactly what is in their minds, and that is as it should be, because that is what we are all here to do. But I remind the House that every word in both of the reports was agreed by everyone on the Committee.

There are 10 of us on the Committee. We are a diverse lot and we do not all sit on the same side of the House. Nevertheless, the evidence was given to us all and we all spent many hours deciding what to make of it. The outcome was this unanimous report. Furthermore, as can be seen from its text, our report was based solely on the evidence before us. The conclusions that we drew, and the reasons for them, are set down in black and white for all to see.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I wrote to the Clerk of the Committee on 6 March 1986, drawing his attention to the fact—appendix 12(xii) on page 352—that it is hard to understand why the Prime Minister does not feel that there was any breach of the disciplinary code by her civil servants if they had not consulted her in any way. I said that I hoped that members of the Select Committee on Defence would consider examining the Prime Minister in detail on that important point, particularly as, in a letter to me dated 17 February, the Prime Minister had replied as head of the Civil Service addressing a disciplinary issue, saying that the discharge of their duties in that as in other respects was within the general responsibility of Ministers to Parliament for the policies and management of their Departments. In the light of that, will the right hon. Gentleman, as Chairman of that Committee, explain why the Select Committee did not question the Prime Minister in the interest of pursuing the truth?

Sir Humphrey Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman is asking me to do exactly what I have said that I will not do. We have produced our report and all the evidence, including the extracts to which he referred, and we are content to be judged by the House as to whether or not we have done a good job. I also said that anyone can say what he likes. That is so, and the right hon. Gentleman no doubt will. We sought to do the job with which we were charged, and the result is there for everyone to see.

The Committee was unanimous. Therefore, anyone who disagrees with what we have written—and anyone is entitled to do that—is disagreeing not just with one or two people or even with people who take a different view about the merits of the present Government but with all 10 of his fellow Members. Of course we may be wrong. None of us claims any infallibility. But I for one will need a certain amount of convincing that we are wrong.

The last six paragraphs of the Government's response deal with what we said towards the end of the fourth report about accountability and the position of civil servants. I say at once that I have no quarrel whatever with the Government about what they have said about the basic principles. A civil servant is the servant of, and responsible to, the Government — to the Minister who is his superior. Each Minister is responsible to Parliament for what he does and for what civil servants do in his name. He is also accountable to Parliament for these matters and has a duty to explain to Parliament what is done by him or his civil servants. Furthermore, I agree that if a civil servant has done wrong it is normally his superiors in the service—and if necessary his Minister—who have the responsibility to take action, including disciplinary action if that is appropriate.

All this seems perfectly clear and, I imagine, is accepted by everyone. But the final sentence of the Government's response says that they propose to give a general instruction to civil servants not to answer questions put by a Select Committee that are concerned with their conduct, and in that regard I am less happy. I want to make two or three observations about it.

Let me make it clear that I am speaking only as Chairman of the Defence Committee and in no way on behalf of any other Committee whose Chairman and members will no doubt have views of their own. The Defence Committee considered this proposition briefly at its meeting last week, and a number of points arose which it is only right that I should communicate to the Government at this, the first opportunity.

First, unlike some commentators, I do not regard the Government's proposal as a constitutional innovation. We are perfectly accustomed to a civil servant, giving evidence to us, being asked, "Why did you do this?" or, "Why did you write that letter in those terms?" and replying, "Because my Minister told me to," or, "Because I was carrying out the policy of the Government as enunciated to me by my Minister." Naturally, we accept that, and do not ask any further questions on it, although of course we may well pursue it with the Minister.

We are also accustomed, although it happens less often, to receiving the reply, "My Minister has told me that he would prefer to answer questions about this himself"—in other words, "I have been told not to answer this." Therefore, there is nothing constitutionally new in the Government's proposal. What is new is that the proposal as worded is for a blanket instruction covering all civil servants at all times. This, even in our first consideration of the proposal, has posed to us a number of questions about how we could work in the future. I shall tell the Government of three.

First, this proposal as worded specifically applies to civil servants. In the course of our work we frequently take evidence from military personnel. Is it intended that we should be debarred from asking Navy, Army and Air Force officers or other ranks what they do, how they do it and what they did in a particular case? This may seem to be a minor point, but it is important to us and, I think, to the House because quite a proportion of what we report to the House is the result of evidence given to us by the military.

Secondly, as the House knows, the Government intend to privatise the operations of the royal dockyards, and consortia are being put together to submit tenders for the management contracts. More than one of these consortia include civil servants and naval officers. What they do as members of a consortium is not, of course, the responsibility of Ministers. However, one can easily see the possibility of a conflict of interest that would relate directly to their conduct as officials and serving officers. Is it intended that this area should be barred to the Committee?

Thirdly, there is the matter of executive responsibility budgets. These were introduced into the Ministry of Defence last year by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and provided that senior civil servants should have the responsibility for managing the employment of sums of public money allocated to them. Paragraph 506 of the Statement on Defence Estimates 1985 described them as

"enhancing the accountability of individual managers."

We are told that executive responsibility budgets cover £3 billion of annual public expenditure and, as the White Paper says, are to be a matter not for the Minister but for the individual civil servant. I really cannot believe that the Government intend to prevent a Select Committee from inquiring into how its servants discharge their duty in relation to these enormous sums of money.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): It is even more difficult than that, because the accounting officer, who is a civil servant, has statutory responsibility to Parliament and through Parliament, to the Public Accounts Committee. It is not the Minister who has those statutory responsibilities, it is the accounting officer, and our work, which has lasted for more than 100 years, would be wound up if this were carried out.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman is Chairman of the Public Accounts Committe, as I well know. I said that I was speaking only on behalf of the Defence Committee. I thought that, had the right hon. Gentleman wanted to make that point he would have done so in a speech. But he has made it in an intervention which no doubt has been just as well noted.

I have given three examples that occurred immediately to the Defence Committee. There is, however, a more important general question. The Standing Orders of the House establish all the Committees to examine

"the expenditure, administration and policy"

of the relevant Ministry. I know that the Government would not wish to prevent us from carrying out one third of the task that the House has given us—administration — but on a wide interpretation the Government's proposal in paragraph 44 would do just that. I suspect that much hangs on the precise definition of the word "conduct", and it is my belief that this requires much further consideration.

I should therefore like to make a suggestion to the Government that I hope my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be able to accept. It is, "Stay your hand. Do not issue this instruction immediately. First consult the House and its Committees before deciding whether to go ahead and, if so, in what precise form." A direct clash does neither the Government nor the House any good. This way, I believe, it can be avoided.

5.48 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): It is a real pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) as Chairman of the Defence Committee. I begin by congratulating him and his Committee on the report that they have produced. Even though he did not say why they had not questioned the Prime Minister, I place it on record that the report so far as it goes is a masterly document. We are all grateful to our colleagues who spend so much of their time on the often unrewarding task of serving on these Select Committees in general, and on this one in particular.

I note the way in which this report is eminently readable. This would be welcome in all official publications. For example, in referring to the apparent straying from the conventions on collective responsibility of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), paragraph 4 states:

"the steps that were taken within Government to counter and even to discredit his view could only with great restraint be described as merely unorthodox."

That is a masterly piece of draftsmanship and understatement.

Again, in referring to the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter, paragraph 151 states:

"Sir Robert Armstrong told us, a trifle euphemistically, that Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell 'accepted' that the DTI should make the disclosure."

In addition, in referring to the reasons why the disclosure remained unattributable, paragraph 168 states:

"Sir Robert Armstrong told us that the extracts were released unattributably because the Department of Trade and Industry did not want to disclose at that stage that there was disagreement between one Government Department and another."

The Committee then tells us:

"We do not doubt that Sir Robert accurately reported what he was told in his inquiry, but we do hope that his credulity was as sorely taxed as ours."

Any report written in that vein is truly to be welcomed by the House.

I deeply regret that we are mixing in this one unsatisfactory debate both the serious issue of the future of helicopter production and the constitutional issues which the right hon. Member for Spelthorne mentioned at the end of his speech. That is thoroughly unsatisfactory.

[Mr. David Steel]

My hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), in whose constituency the bulk of the Westland operation lies, hopes to speak about the third report from the Defence Committee. I shall therefore say only a brief word on that. I believe strongly—the Select Committee report bears this out — that the basic trouble into which Westland landed itself stemmed in 1984-85 from the Government's hands-off approach to manufacturing industry in general.

The report says that as late as 8 August the now chairman of the Conservative party, then still the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, was telling the company to find a market solution. A month later he was replaced by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) who gave what Sir John Cuckney called "the cold shoulder" to the company.

There are two lessons to be learnt, one of which was pointed out in the Select Committee's report. First, the 1978 helicopter agreement between the four European Governments was never pursued with adequate vigour by any of the Governments. The Committee draws that conclusion clearly. It describes the general approach by the right hon. Member for Henley to the subject as being "compelling" but, of course, rather late in the day. The report implies that this lack of concerted effort on helicopter procurement among the European Governments is only too typical of our defence procurement policies generally.

The second lesson relevant to Westland which the report highlights is that none of our competitors, whether in Europe, the United States or anywhere else, adopt such a hands-off approach to their industries, especially when defence is concerned. Certainly the United States Administration, the high apostle of the free market economy, are highly interventionist in relation to the defence industry.

Westland is simply one casualty among many, part of the one fifth of manufacturing capacity which has been lost since this Government came to power through the dedicated application of what the right hon. Member for Spelthorne described in a masterly understatement, as "inaction" by the present Administration.

I shall deal mainly with the fourth report in my brief speech. I blame the Government for the way in which the debate has been handled. I am sorry that the Secretary of State for Defence has left the Chamber, because I wanted to tell him that I have long been an admirer of his. I have watched him for many years at the Scottish Office, and no member of the Government is as able as he to indulge in such deadpan, stonewalling and buck-passing with such effect. He did that beautifully this afternoon.

I blame the Leader of the Opposition for allowing a debate such as this to occur. Why is he not leading on the important constitutional and political issues involved? He has allowed the Prime Minister to get off the hook and to remain silent again on the major issues. We should be debating the Government's conduct as well as Westland interests. The Leader of the Opposition should take an interest in the conduct of the Government.

In paragraph 109, the fourth report states:

"The . . . assumption that, if Mr. Heseltine's resignation was not to be required, he could be thwarted by any means, cannot be justified."

That is a serious unanimous finding by the Committee.

As we have already heard, on Saturday 4 January the Prime Minister herself asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to get hold of the Law Officers to check what the Secretary of State for Defence had written. That Saturday evening the Solicitor-General gave his preliminary opinion and received the response from the Prime Minister that, in the words of the Select Committee, "the matter could not be left there."

It was she who instigated the Solicitor-General's letter to the Secretary of State for Defence.

By Monday afternoon, 6 January, copies of the letter had gone to No. 10 and to the Department of Trade and Industry. It is interesting to note that the Select Committee says that the Prime Minister's excuse for this matter being brought into the public domain was the 4 o'clock deadline of the Westland meeting. The report finds that reason "flimsy." Why is the Prime Minister not here to answer that telling criticism?

Paragraph 144 of the report states that, when the letter arrived at the Department of Trade and Industry, Miss Colette Bowe was among those present. The Committee states:

"The fact that she was alerted to the receipt of the letter and was present at that stage suggests that before consulting the Secretary of State and before speaking to No. 10 the officials had in mind that some public use of the information contained in the letter was indicated."

Who indicated that? The implication is that the indication must have come right at the beginning when the letter was sought from the Solicitor-General. Otherwise, there was no point in asking for the letter. Then the leak to the Press Association was arranged. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks, in his evidence to the Committee, says throughout that it was all to be subject to the agreement of No. 10.

Mr. Dalyell: What was Miss Bowe doing there at all, unless the whole point was to leak the letter? Surely Law Officers' letters in No. 10 Downing street in any Government are handled most gingerly, because of their effect in the courts. The question has never been answered as to what on earth the press officers—either Miss Bowe or Mr. Ingham—were doing with the letters in the first place.

Mr. Steel: The Select Committee says that the only reason why she was there was that her presence was to be required. In other words, it was previously arranged that the letter was to be put into the public domain. That was the whole point.

In paragraph 155 the Committee tells the House:

"As far as the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter was concerned, however, Mr. Ingham undoubtedly realised the implication of what was about to take place and wished to distance No. 10 and the Prime Minister from the consequences."

That appears in bold type. The Committee continues:

"The method of disclosure that was adopted, the unattributable communication of tendentious extracts from the letter, was disreputable."

The Committee uses the word "disreputable", yet the Prime Minister is not here to answer for "disreputable" conduct or for "flimsy" reasons.

Paragraph 160 of the report states:

"The officials who reached the judgment on 6 January that giving information to the Press Association was the only way of making it public at the time made a wrong decision."

Who is to carry the can for that "wrong decision"? We are told that no civil servants are to be subject to disciplinary procedure for wrong decisions, so the responsibility must be that of Ministers.

I have examined the Select Committee's evidence. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks refused to answer many questions. As he is no longer a Minister, he is not answerable to the House under the constitution. In a sense, the bird had flown the minute that he resigned. We have not been able to pursue the real questions.

This afternoon the Secretary of State for Defence rested on the conclusion in the Select Committee report that what was done was

"without the Prime Minister's direct authority".

Many people have wondered how that could be. How could it be that over that whole weekend and the following week, before setting up the Sir Robert Armstrong inquiry, the Prime Minister never bothered to ask Leon, Robert or Bernard what actually went on? That is straining our credulity, but I believe it. I do not believe that she asked.

The right hon. Lady never asked because she knew that if the ball of wool was unravelled it would come back to her. One does not ask questions if one is determined to remain in studied ignorance of what happened. That is why she never asked. She knew what the answers would be. That is why the bogus inquiry was set up and why, when it was reported to the House, I said that if the Prime Minister was living in the real world outside she would find herself on a charge of wasting the time of the police. That conclusion is reinforced by the descriptions of the Select Committee on Defence.

I now turn to the final points made by the Chairman of the Select Committee, especially with reference to the recent report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee. I am extremely disturbed, as I am sure he must be, by the proposed debar of Select Committees to question civil servants in future. The Treasury and Civil Service Committee said in paragraph 3.17:

"If Crichel Down is dead and Ministers are not accountable to Parliament for some actions of their officials, then who is?"

If not Ministers, it can only be officials. I believe that the Committee is correct, and that is why this issue is of far greater constitutional, parliamentary and political importance then we have allowed it to assume so far.

Mr. Dalyell: The right hon. Gentleman raises the issue of Crichel Down. Is it not a fact that the civil servants involved there were very remote in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and that Sir Thomas Dugdale could not have been expected to have much firsthand knowledge? However, Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell were as close to the Prime Minister as Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman were to Richard Nixon.

Mr. Steel: That is true. Without side-tracking, I think the hon. Gentleman will accept that since the Dugdale case we have all accepted that there is a much greater responsibility on the part of civil servants. That is one of the reasons why parliamentary Committees must be able to cross-examine civil servants. We no longer maintain the fiction that Ministers must be so knowledgeable and know every detail of their Administration. The Civil Service has grown, and the complexity of a Minister's work has grown. Nobody is pleading the Dugdale case as being the standard by which we should operate. That is all the more reason why we must reject the Government's reply to the Select Committee and the paragraphs mentioned by the Chairman.

My criticism of the Government and the way in which this has been handled is that it goes to the heart of the way in which the Prime Minister runs the Government. It is much more like a court than a Cabinet, including the divine right of monarchs to rule. The way in which the Government have been conducted and the Prime Minister's style of government reminded me of Tom Lehrer's lines in the song about the John Birch Society:

"There's no one left but thee and me and I'm not sure of thee."

That is the Prime Minister's attitude to government and, as it turns out, to Select Committees. She is not sure of them any longer, so their powers must be curbed.

The truth is that the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks has been made the fall guy in this affair. Presumably we will not know for some time whether it was done willingly, or whether he was forced. I am concerned about what we used to call liberal democracy. I am concerned that the unwritten rules of our liberal democracy are being strained. That is why I strongly favour a Freedom of Information Act. If the unwritten rules are to be strained in this way, we should have some written rules.

This whole episode has diminished the Prime Minister and the Government. It is in danger of diminishing Parliament if we leave this rather facile Adjournment debate as being our sole response to what I regard as an attack on our Select Committee system. The scar of this shabby episode will remain long after the Prime Minister and the Government have gone. We who are concerned about the reputation of the Parliament should give a clear warning that we will stand together across the Floor of the House against any further erosion of the powers of Parliament to call the Government to account for their deeds, misdeeds and failures.

6.4 pm

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): Since I last spoke in the House about these matters, three days after my resignation, much has been written and spoken about the Westland affair and more has been added today. What I want to do today is to draw what seem to me two important conclusions for the future arising from it. But before doing so, I also want to make it clear that I stand by what I said to the House in my speech last January.

In that speech I said that I made it clear to my officials at the Department of Trade and Industry that, subject to the agreement of No. 10, I was giving authority for the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence. In saying that, I was confirming what the Prime Minister herself had said to the House the previous Thursday. Consent to the disclosure was of course given by Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham and that disclosure duly took place. I told the House that I therefore accepted full responsibility for it.

I also said to the House last January that I accepted that the disclosure should not have taken place in the way that it did, and I profoundly regretted that it had happened. I reiterate today both my acceptance and responsibility and my regret at what occurred.

Since last January the detailed events of those days have been considered by the Select Committee, and it has placed its own glosses upon them, upon which I shall not

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comment. But if anything of value for the future is to result from those unhappy events, it seems to me that we should be concentrating on the long-term lessons to be derived from it.

The first relates to the doctrine of collective ministerial responsibility — the doctrine that, once a decision is taken within Government, it is the duty of all Ministers, as long as they remain within the Government, to be loyal to that decision, whether they agree with it or not. Until the Westland affair it might have been tempting to regard that doctrine as one only of importance for constitutional purists and not one that really matters in today's world. The Westland affair has illustrated beyond peradventure that the doctrine of collective ministerial responsibility is, and must still be, very much part of our constitution. If it is ignored, the result is likely to be, and was, disaster.

In the Westland affair, in the words of the Select Committee, the Government were

"treated to the unusual spectacle of one of its number, supported by the resources of his Department, pursuing a policy which was diametrically opposed to the Government's stated policy."

To pursue that policy, relentless media briefing and tendentious disclosures and revelations took place on a daily, if not hourly, basis. That was bound to put the Government as a whole, and in particular the Minister whose departmental responsibility it was to implement the Government's policy, in a position of unparalleled difficulty. It led to things happening which unquestionably should not have happened, and for a while public conflict replaced coherent government.

Why was that allowed to happen? It was understandable that there should be a desire not to force out of the Government someone who had been a great source of strength to it, and a reluctance to silence a voice which, when used in support of Government policy, had been so eloquent and persuasive. But after the Westland affair, I have no doubt that any future Government, whatever their political complexion, will and should insist that the decisions of the Government should have the support of all Members, and should not be undermined from within.

The second conclusion that I draw from the Westland affair relates to helicopter policy. Was the Government's policy towards the alternative offers to rescue Westland the right one?

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brittan: No, I will not.

Has Westland, as a result, been able to continue to play its role as an important helicopter producing company? I have no doubt that events to date have totally vindicated the Government's policy and it is quite clear that Westland has been strengthened, rather than weakened, as a result. That view was fully supported by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), who is Chairman of the Defence Select Committee.

Mr. Dalyell *rose——*

Mr. Brittan: At the time of the controversy it was strongly argued that the Government should use their power to force Westland to accept the offer of the European consortium. The main argument in favour of that policy was that if Westland went ahead with the Sikorsky-Fiat offer, collaborative programmes involving Westland and European helicopter companies would be gravely imperilled.

So central a feature was that in the argument that, when the Prime Minister's letter to the chairman of Westland did not contain all the material relating to that threat that the then Secretary of State for Defence wanted included, the Ministry of Defence solicited a letter from the bankers of the European consortium, requesting further information. The Secretary of State for Defence then sent a reply, including much of the material which had been excluded from the Prime Minister's letter, after the most careful consideration. That reply was not cleared or even discussed with other members of the Government. But, although the argument about co-operation between Westland and other European helicopter companies was regarded as so crucial as to justify that conduct, one thing is now abundantly clear: the threats that were held out — some would say manufactured — that European co-operation would be withdrawn if the Sikorsky-Fiat offer were accepted, have proved wholly unfounded.

Westland was at the time collaborating with Agusta of Italy to produce the EH101 helicopter, about which the Secretary of State has spoken. The Select Committee concluded last July that

"the EH 101 is now the most secure of all the collaborative helicopter projects in Europe . . . we have received no indication that this development has been or will be put at risk by the association of Westland with UTC."

Work was also beginning on the possible development of the A129 helicopter. The Select Committee concluded:

"The association between UTC and Westland does not appear to have had an adverse effect on this collaboration. Indeed, in evidence to us, Agusta did not seem perturbed about the possibility of the involvement of Westland, through UTC, in the Light Helicopter Experimental (LHX) project, and in fact saw mutual advantages in a closer relationship between the A129 project and the LHX."

Indeed, a few weeks after the Select Committee report was published, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has told us, agreement was reached between Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain to begin work on a new anti-tank helicopter. This will involve studying the feasibility of developing the A129 into a helicopter able to carry out missile attacks on enemy tanks.

Reporting the signature of the memorandum setting out the arrangements for this project, the defence correspondent of *The Times* stated:

"During the controversy over whether Westland should seek financial help through links with European companies, or through the American company, Sikorsky, supporters of the European solution argued that if Westland made a deal with Sikorsky it might be shut out of European projects."

Nevertheless, it is one of the four companies now part of a new company in Italy, Joint European Helicopter.

With regard to the possible development of a joint battlefield helicopter programme, the Select Committee concluded:

"We do not believe that the association between UTC and Westland has had any effect one way or the other on the possibility of a joint battlefield helicopter programme."

It is understandable that Westland's European competitors wanted to stymie the Sikorsky-Fiat approach, and the threat of the collapse of co-operation between Westland and the European companies was an obvious card to play in that game. But the events of the past few months have completely vindicated the Government's decision not to force Westland to pursue a solution to its

problems contrary to the wishes of its directors and work force alike. Westland has continued to co-operate, unimpeded, with other European helicopter companies. It will continue to do so and the cause of European co-operation, of which I am as great an enthusiast as any hon. Member, has not been damaged one jot or tittle by Westland's choice of partners.

I make no apology, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for devoting so much of my remarks to helicopter policy. I have not shirked, nor do I shirk, my share of responsibility for what went wrong with the handling of these issues in Government. But I hope I am also entitled to put these matters in their proper context, which shows a Government reaching a considered view on their policy, finding the implementation of that policy thwarted at every turn by one of their own members, but emerging with the essential rationale of that policy amply vindicated by subsequent events.

6.15 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): It is a privilege to follow the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) in this debate. He and I exchanged words several times across the Floor in the Defence Select Committee, and I want to take this opportunity, which I have not had before, to say before the House that I admired the right hon. and learned Gentleman's courage. He did not have to come before the Defence Select Committee, and it must have been an ordeal for him. I did not think that his answers did his reputation the credit that they could have done, but it must have taken a great deal of courage and he could have walked out at any time. He appeared of his own free will.

I should like to pay tribute to my Conservative colleagues on that Committee. It could not have been easy for them to agree to our fourth report, which makes the most stinging references to senior members of the Conservative party, but they did agree to it. It is a tribute to the integrity and courage of individual Conservative Back-Bench Members that they were prepared to put their names to such an independent report which would, obviously, be extremely embarrassing to the Government.

I do not intend to trespass on the time of the House today by discussing the Committee's third report. It is far less contentious than the fourth report, and the Government's response was welcome and much better considered than their response to our fourth report.

Our fourth report deals with an extraordinary state of affairs. Not only had two senior Ministers resigned, and we did not know whether either of them would ever resume senior ministerial office, but at least one more nearly resigned. The Government tripped from shambles to shambles during the hearings and the negotiations that went on behind the scenes, many of which have never come into the public domain. The right of the Committee to certain documents was questioned, and I am glad to say that the Committee was resolute, won hands down and was allowed to see every line of every document that it, not the Government, decided was relevant to the inquiry. That victory was won, not only for the Defence Select Committee, but for all Select Committees.

Mr. Dalyell: My right hon. Friend talked about Ministers resuming office. If the whole story had been about a Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who for 14 long days deceived senior civil servants, his Cabinet colleagues and his Prime Minister, how could that Prime Minister, in that unique resignation correspondence, express the hope that he would return to high office soon and resume his political career?

Dr. Gilbert: My hon. Friend makes an important point, and no doubt he will make his own speech on the subject if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is not a question for me.

Subsequently, this extraordinary new doctrine has appeared. I take issue with the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) on this, because I believe that the Government are trying to erect a new constitutional doctrine in paragraphs 42 to 44 of their response. I shall come to that shortly.

We also had the extraordinary spectacle of the Prime Minister's behaviour. Opposition Members could see that she was grinning from ear to ear immediately after the leak. She was delighted with the consequences, until we got a little further down the road when, suddenly, she rightly became very apprehensive about the security of her position. She then had to endure the humiliation of having a speech that she had prepared for delivery in the House crawled over by several members of the Government to ensure that it was internally consistent and truthful, and would stand up to the scrutiny of the House.

Before making that speech the Prime Minister had a reputation, whether we liked it or not, of credibility. It was widely thought in the counry that, although one might not like what the Prime Miniter said, one could at least believe it and that she was telling the facts as she saw them. In the middle of the affair, public opinion polls showed that no fewer than 70 per cent. of the British people did not believe the Prime Minister. As the leader of the Liberal party said, that is not good for the Conservative party, not good for the Government and not good for the country.

If newspaper reports are to be believed, it is clear that the Prime Minister still lives in fear of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have an opportunity to intervene, if he likes, to tell me that the newspaper reports are inaccurate. I have heard that he had an opportunity to advise on the Government's response to the Select Committee report and was responsible for the deletion of a couple of paragraphs in it. If that report is inaccurate, the right hon. and learned Gentleman can intervene to say so now. He chooses not to do so.

The Prime Minister comes out of the affair cutting a pretty pathetic figure. There are still a great many unanswered questions. There are a great many questions yet to be asked—for the simple reason that the Select Committee did not interview five named officials. It decided not to interview those officials because the Government told it, "You may have these officials before you, but they will be instructed to say nothing at all." If that is not part of the arrogance of power and an abuse of the Executive's power over the House, I do not know what is, but that is what the Select Committee was faced with.

It is inevitable that I should consider the role of certain civil servants in the affair. At one stage in our cross-examination of Sir Robert Armstrong I put it to him that at least five officials—everybody knows who they were—were in it up to their necks. Sir Robert Armstrong replied that that was an utterly unfair remark and that the

[Dr. Gilbert]

officials had ministerial authority. The Committee commented on that at paragraph 173 of the fourth report. I shall refresh the House's memory. It reads:

"The Prime Minister told the House, and the Secretary of the Cabinet told us, that the officials in the DTI were confident that they had the authority of their Secretary of State and 'cover'—whatever that may mean—from No. 10. 'Cover' is used in distinction to 'authority'. The only authority given was that of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. We do not believe that such authority is sufficient, or would be regarded by senior officials in key positions as sufficient, to make public parts of a document

- which was classified;
- which did not originate in the Secretary of State's own department;
- which contained the advice of a Law Officer;
- which was to be disclosed without the knowledge or permission of the Law Officer."

Either they had that authority, or they did not. If they did not, their careers should have suffered. If they did, the person who gave the authority should suffer accordingly.

We all know that there is only one Minister capable of giving ministerial authority to Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell — the Prime Minister. I have recently written to the Prime Minister asking her whether, in view of the comments that the Government have made in paragraphs 42 and 44 of their response, she would be prepared to give evidence to a Select Committee — I did not say the Defence Select Committee—if it at any time wanted to inquire into the actions of members of her Private Office or the press secretary at 10 Downing street. Something tells me that I shall not get a reply before 10 pm tonight.

The most serious impact of what happened in the Westland affair was its impact on Civil Service morale. It must have gone wide and deep. We had the spectacle of the private secretary — this all comes out in the Select Committee's evidence — to the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry apparently putting to the Secretary of State over the telephone the possibility of the course of conduct which was subsequently followed. We had Miss Bowe, who seems to be the least blameworthy of the officials, apparently telling Mr. Ingham, "I do not want to do it, it is wrong," more than once, but to no great avail because, knowing that it was wrong, she ultimately did it. She was clearly under intense pressure. One of the people applying the pressure was Mr. Mogg, but Mr. Ingham and Mr. Michell were involved too.

I should emphasise that I know none of these officials personally. I am told that Mr. Powell is a much liked and much respected official at the Foreign Office. He must have known that what he was doing was wrong. One does not get into the Prime Minister's private office without being a high flyer. One has to be a civil servant of the highest quality to arrive at such a position. We all know that high-flying civil servants pride themselves on their political antennae. They think of themselves as being more political than politicians. Mr. Powell must have known perfectly well what was going on.

People come to me and say, "Do not be too hard on Mr. Powell, he is a very nice chap." With respect to Mr. Ingham, I have to say that there are no doubt some people who think that he is a very nice chap, but I have yet to meet one. No doubt such people exist outside his family. Mr. Ingham is quoted in Sunday's papers as replying to Miss Bowe's saying, "I do not want to do it, it is wrong", "You will expletive well do as you are expletive well told." I have no idea whether such language is typical of Mr. Ingham. Irrespective of whether he used such language, it produced the desired effect.

There is an interesting interface between Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Brian Hayes and the Attorney-General. In my view, it is absolutely not to be believed that Sir Brian Hayes did not know, within minutes of returning to his Department, what had happened. I was in government for only about five years, but I got to know quite a few permanent secretaries. I refuse to believe that a permanent secretary was not told by his own officials. He would have had to inquire as soon as he got back to his desk what had happened and about the trouble that was brewing.

I refuse to believe that Sir Brian Hayes did not communicate to Sir Robert Armstrong as quickly as possible the thunderstorm that was brewing for them all. It follows from that — and the Select Committee has virtually said it—that Sir Robert Armstrong must have known that the inquiry was a charade. To be fair to Sir Robert, he did not want to have an inquiry, and he was right not to want to have one, because he knew perfectly well what the inquiry would produce. However, that is why he resisted the Attorney-General's pressure.

The question in my mind, which is one of the more interesting unanswered questions, is whether Sir Robert Armstrong told the Attorney-General the full reason why an inquiry was not necessary. Did he just say, "This poor girl has been put under intense pressure," or did he say that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had been part of the pressure? If he followed the second course and told the Attorney-General that the instructions to Miss Bowe had come from the Minister, her own Secretary of State, the Attorney-General was an accomplice in the charade. That is an interpretation that I am reluctant to accept, because I have a high opinion of the Attorney-General and his reputation. So if one follows the line that Sir Robert did not tell the Attorney-General the full reason why an inquiry was unnecessary, why did he not do so? Surely it can only be because he did not trust even the Attorney-General with the knowledge that either the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or the Prime Minister had authorised the disclosure. That is one of the most remarkable parts of the commentary on how business was then being conducted in the Government.

Part of the effect on the morale of the Civil Service was the sorry spectacle that the head of the Civil Service presented before our Committee. Let me say straight away that there is no criticsm whatsoever of him in respect of any events until the time that he agreed to the inquiry, but from then on I am afraid that his position is not one that has done his career or reputation any good. He knew the whole story before he started the inquiry. He could not, in answer to a simple question by our Committee, even bring himself to say whether the actions of officials were improper. He never interviewed the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks. He refused to answer questions about named officials. He pleaded his charade of an inquiry in aid against the Committee interviewing the Civil Service witnesses whom we had already said we wanted to interview. He said—not us—that their lives, careers and reputations were in jeopardy and it would be unfair for our Committee to put them through such an ordeal again, when he had put them through such an ordeal, on his own evidence, knowing perfectly well that it was not necessary because, according to him, their actions had been covered by ministerial authority.

I am afraid that I do not see that it is possible for the head of the Civil Service's reputation to recover from the mauling that it received as a result of his appearances before our inquiry. Again, that can be to nobody's good. It is not to the good of the Government, and it is certainly not to the good of the Civil Service. It is not to the good of the country.

Finally, we have the extraordinary response from the Government, particularly paragraphs 42 to 44. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who is Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, intervened in the speech of the right hon. Member for Spelthorne, who is Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, to point out that if one takes the words of the response literally, the work of the Public Accounts Committee will become impossible. The Committee could not do the job that is statutorily laid upon it, nor could the Select Committee on Defence.

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne gave a couple of examples. I could give some more. For three years I was responsible for defence procurement. At that time it amounted to about £4,000 million a year. I cannot remember what the exact floor level was; I think that it was about £25 million. I never looked at any expenditure under £25 million, probably a higher figure—it would have been impossible for a Minister to do so—but the civil servants were involved in day-to-day decisions on such matters. The idea that all that civil servants do is give advice to Ministers is fiction. They are engaged in the day-to-day exercise of executive authority. They place contracts. They have to see whether the public get value for money. They have to see whether contracts are executed on time. They have to see whether the goods that are supplied are of the standard that the Department requires. Those are all Executive decisions, taken not by Ministers, not in consultation with Ministers, but on the responsibility of civil servants.

If the Government's extraordinary response were taken at face value, it would be impossible for the Select Committee on Defence to scrutinise the activities of civil servants with respect to the execution of their responsibilities. I find it difficult to see how the work of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration would be carried out if the response were taken at face value. But it is not for me to talk about the work of other Select Committees. I merely note that the response by the Government to our fourth report apparently will be considered by the Select Committee on Procedure, the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service and the Liaison Committee. I hope very much that all Select Committees will consider the Government's response, particularly paragraphs 42 to 44, and come to a view so that they can give guidance to their Chairmen when the Liaison Committee, which I gather will also consider it on 20 November, takes a view on it. I hope that the overwhelming corpus of hon. Members who belong to Select Committees can present a united front to the Leader of the House on the matter.

This line of the Government's is new. It is simply untenable. I hope that all of us, as parliamentarians, will resist it strongly. We are here to protect people against maladministration and injustice. If we cannot scrutinise the work or responsibility of individual officials, our task will be made impossible.

As I said, there are three possibilities for the Government. They can openly repudiate the document, which is asking a lot of any Government. They can quietly not enforce it, which I suspect is what will happen, or perhaps we shall have from the Leader of the House tonight one of those elegant clarifications for which he is widely known and popular. However, the response was brought about by pique and fear, largely as a result of the Government's realisation of the power of a determined Select Committee to investigate cases of malpractice in government.

I only wish that we had occasion today to vote on the Select Committee report, because I believe that it would have had the overwhelming support of the House. I doubt very much whether the Government's response would have had very much support. I suspect that that is why we are discussing the matter on an Adjournment debate rather than, as is more normal, on a debate to take note of or to approve either the Select Committee report or the Government's response. The Government's response is the last shabby, untenable outcome of the affair. It is an attempt by the Government to gag Select Committees, which means also a high proportion of Members of the House, in the exercise of their constitutional duty. I hope that when the time comes the House will have none of it.

6.39 pm

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I share with the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) a dislike for paragraphs 42 to 44 of the Government's response. I think that I am the third member of the Select Committee on Defence who has taken part in the debate. It is an unsatisfactory debate because it is in three parts. The Committee's third report is quite separate from the fourth report. Then there are what I regard as the grave constitutional implications of paragraphs 42 to 44 which affect all Select Committees and, I think, Parliament and our relationships with our constituents and outside bodies.

The third report has been clearly and well dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins). However, I shall pick out one or two points in the Government's response to the report. I was delighted that paragraph 27 of the Government's response said that there were excellent working relationships between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence, both formally and informally. Those excellent working relationships have not always been apparent to members of the Select Committee or, I suspect, to many people outside the House. We believe that the possibility of a ministerial aerospace board, which has been suggested in the past, should have been considered further. Quite clearly, it was communications, among other things, and, dare I say it, a lack of manufacturing industrial strategy in the DTI that precipitated some of the problems that we are discussing today.

Paragraph 9 refers to the Air Mobile Brigade. I was interested to hear what the Secretary of State for Defence said. I urge him to give sympathetic consideration to the Select Committee's proposal. To the best of my knowledge, all our allies and partners are pursuing that capability. It would be odd if we were the only member of NATO to go in the opposite direction. That capability would give us maximum flexibility and would allow us to make a rapid response. If we were to disband the Air Mobile Brigade, it would lose a lot of expertise and experience. I hope that there will be a positive response, notwithstanding the resource implications that are always with the Ministry of Defence.

[Mr. Keith Speed]

Paragraph 10 mentions the responsibility of the Army as users of support helicopters. I am bound to say that I am not convinced by the replies of the Secretary of State and the Government. The arguments used by the Secretary of State could apply to the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy is a user and is responsible for a helicopter programme. One of the reasons the EH101 is a success story, is going ahead and is far advanced is that in 1980 the Navy as a user identified what it wanted and went ahead with it. The same is true of the sonar links, the strike links and various helicopters in the Navy's arsenal. I do not say it in any anti-RAF terms, but having a divided responsibility between the Army and the RAF is not to the benefit of either. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider how the Royal Navy's responsibility, both from the point of view of user and of taking it through, has worked extremely well over the past few years and should, in my view and in that of the Select Committee, apply to the Army.

I was disappointed with the dampening effect of paragraph 6 and the fact that the Ministry of Defence poured cold water on the Select Committee's suggestion to fit Sea Eagle to the EH101. That would significantly increase the surface-to-air strike capability of our frigates in the early 1990s; otherwise they will rely on links with the Sea Skua. Later, the type 23 frigate will not have links; it will have the EH101. I remind the Ministry of Defence that, if the Indian Navy can have Sea Kings fitted with Sea Eagle, it should not be beyond the capacity of the Royal Navy to have EH101s fitted with Sea Eagle. I hope that that matter will be considered and that the Minister will be slightly more enthusiastic about it.

I think that the Government's response to the fourth report was a pretty thin gruel. I endorse everything that has been said by most hon. Members who have spoken. The Government argued, at paragraph 32 in their response, that the head of the Home Civil Service, Sir Robert Armstrong, is not the direct superior of officials in the Department of Trade and Industry. The Select Committee's report never said that he was. The Government went on to say:

"The Head of the Home Civil Service does not supervise, and has never supervised, the day-to-day work of members of the Prime Minister's office: he is their superior only as a result of the Prime Minister's office being treated for 'pay and rations' as part of the Cabinet Office".

The whole point that we made in our report, which came out in the cross-examination of Sir Robert Armstrong by myself and others, was that Sir Robert Armstrong said that he was responsible for pay and rations.

However, when he was questioned earlier about whether Mr. Ingham, the senior information officer at No. 10, should have known the rules governing the release of Law Officers' advice, he said that of course there were rules—a special category of Law Officers' advice. Later, he said that he was responsible; he was Mr. Ingham's boss, in Civil Service terms. When I said that it would be his responsibility that Mr. Ingham should be aware of advice issued to people at his level, Sir Robert Armstrong said that it would.

That goes far beyond the question of pay and rations. It is unsatisfactory, as the Committee said, to have a person who is Secretary of the Cabinet and head of the Home Civil Service taking part in an investigation of one of the key people, Mr. Ingham, who is his immediate subordinate and is responsible for seeing that he is properly briefed on a matter such as the Law Officers' advice. Yet the head of the Home Civil Service carried out the investigation. If such an investigation were conducted in the services or in a police force, a person from outside would be chosen to head the investigation, not the immediate superior of the person who may have some responsibility. That is just one example. I believe that there are many others. If time allowed, one could consider why the Government's response to the Select Committee's report was unsatisfactory.

The most unsatisfactory part of the Government's response concerns paragraphs 42 to 44 on the question of accountability. The Government's reply fails to state that two important conditions were made prior to the recommendations of the first report—the 1977-78 report of the Select Committee on Procedure. The first was that the Select Committee should have the power to order attendance of persons to give evidence and, second, that Select Committees should have power to order production of papers and records by any Minister. It is significant that those two conditions are not in the Government's reply.

I do not need to remind the House of the difficulties that the Defence Committee had: indeed, the right hon. Member for Dudley, East reminded the House earlier. If the Government's prohibition had been in force, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Brian Hayes would not have been able to give evidence. It is difficult to see what evidence the Committee could have taken unless the Prime Minister had been called before it, and that would have been most unsatisfactory.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East and others referred to the position of accounting officers and that of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration — the Ombudsman Committee — privilege, and the fact that this Government, quite rightly, have followed their predecessors' practice and have increasingly given more power and management responsibility to civil servants. Whatever words one may use—I use the words "financial management initiatives"—the fact of that matter is that government is big business. We delude ourselves if we think that Ministers in any large spending Department whose expenditure runs into billions of pounds are au fait with all the details.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East gave examples of his experience in the Ministry 10 years ago. I can speak with slightly more recent experience of the same Ministry, and he is absolutely right. I encourage that practice if we are to get the right men and women into the Civil Service. It is a charade to expect Ministers to be responsible for accounting officers, and so on, and for management development, if the Government cut off those people from giving evidence to Select Committees and accounting for their actions.

Five or six years ago the Government—all credit to them — increased the number of Select Committees. Government then became more open and more accountable. If paragraphs 42 to 44 are adopted by the Government and become the future norm, not only will we turn the clock back but the Civil Service may not respond well. It will make total nonsense of trying to get more management experience and more financial accountability in the various Government Departments. It will be a bad day for the House. We will not have accountability from Ministers unless, from time to time, there is a plethora of ministerial resignations, and I do not think that anyone

wants to go back to the days of Crichel Down. We will have more secret Government and more investigations of the type seen in this affair. That is not satisfactory. That cannot be in the interests of good Parliament, good Government or good democracy.

6.50 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): It is a pleasure to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed). In his latter remarks he mentioned some of the difficulties that Select Committees, especially the Select Committee on Defence, would face if the Government's strictures in paragraphs 42 to 44 of their response to the report of the Select Committee on Defence were adopted.

There are some further difficulties. Is it the intention of paragraph 44 that a person such as Mr. Peter Levene, who is responsible for expenditure of about £9 billion, should not be questioned by a Select Committee about his conduct? A few days ago my hon. Friend for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and I met the newly appointed Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement who, through no fault of his own, was not up to date on matters concerning the royal dockyards, but it was obvious—I hope that I am not disclosing anything confidential—that Dr. Harte, who is responsible for the day-to-day deliberations on the contractors who are likely to take charge of the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth, and the information going to Ministers, was fully conversant with what was involved. If the recommendations in paragraph 44 are followed, it will not be possible to question Dr. Harte about his conduct in the negotiations. That would be reprehensible.

The Secretary of State for Defence, when responding to the Committee's report on helicopters, mentioned some of the problems associated with foreign ownership. He should consider the fact that some of the bidders for the dockyards are directly owned by United States companies, particularly Foster Wheeler, which I understand will be the favoured contractor in Devonport if the policy comes to fruition.

I was interested in the remarks of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) about collective responsibility. Paragraph 177 of the fourth report—I recognise that it is easy to quote out of context — deals with the behaviour of individuals. It states:

> "In the unusual and sometimes bizarre reasoning which has been put before us, a justification has been given for each step taken. Although those involved must carry blame for what occurred, what seems especially reprehensible is a manner of doing business where the direct and honourable course does not present itself to the exclusion of all else."

If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is to rest much of his case on collective responsibility and the resuscitation of collective responsibility, a direct and honourable approach ought to present itself to the exclusion of all others. It is bizarre that, from 3 to 6 January 1986, in that inter-relationship between the Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Trade and Industry, no one thought of telephoning the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) to ask, "What are you up to?" The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks did not think of saying to the Prime Minister, "Why should we not go to the Solicitor-General and ask him to write a letter? Why do I not ring Michael and have a talk?"

That would have been a direct and honourable approach. Indeed, if the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks had direct departmental responsibility, he could have said to the Cabinet at some stage—perhaps he did; we are not privy to Cabinet minutes—"It is very odd that a campaign is being conducted in the press by the right hon. Member for Henley. It is extremely embarrassing to me. I am the Minister. Will you, Prime Minister, call us together and sort this out?" That approach would have been direct and honourable. I do not know why that was not done.

I have never been a member of a Government, and I am unlikely to be. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should not all cheer. There have been Labour Prime Ministers. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South (Mr. Callaghan) is one example. I cannot imagine these matters being ventilated in the press on a day-to-day basis without some calls for an honourable approach. I cannot imagine the former Prime Minister, Lord Wilson, not following a similar approach. If collective responsibility is to be reintroduced, we should have in mind a more direct and honourable approach to these affairs.

The Secretary of State for Defence sought some succour from paragraph 183 of the Select Committee's report, which effectively lets the Prime Minister off the hook. The paragraph states:

> "The evidence is that the action of the Prime Minister's office on 6 January in relation to the disclosure was without her direct authority. She has stated that she had no knowledge on 6 January of what was taking place."

That statement practically lets the Prime Minister off the hook. Those words were carefully chosen. The disclosure was without her authority. The words deal with 6 January; they do not deal with 4 January or any other period.

The leader of the Liberal party has put his gloss on that episode. The Select Committee used that phrase. Let us consider the consequences if we did otherwise. If we do not accept the Prime Minister's words, in effect we have to say that she was lying, that she was not telling the truth, and we would have to prove it. The only way to do so would be to summon the Prime Minister and ask her or her civil servants to give evidence on oath.

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) laid great stress on the importance of having a unanimous report. As a Select Committee member, I agree. I do not think that we would have done a service to the House if we had produced a divided report.

Therefore, we spent a long time on the report. I make no apology for that, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert), and in particular the Tory members of the Committee, on undertaking this arduous tasks of achieving a unanimous report. We saw ourselves, individually and collectively, as servants of the House performing a task. Although we had embarked on an investigation, the task was placed on the Select Committee by the House of Commons and we had to discharge that duty. I repeat that the words chosen, particularly in paragraph 183, were designed to keep the Committee united. I make no apology for suggesting that these words do not completely — nor can they — exonerate the Prime Minister from her activities or her responsibilities over her civil servants.

We probed Sir Robert Armstrong, and it was an interesting experience to see the head of the Civil Service come before a Select Committee. He is a slick operator and a skilful man, and there came a point in our proceedings when he knew very well that he was round Tattenham

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

corner and into the home straight, and he sat back and began to tell jokes about the pig and the hen, and a bacon and egg breakfast. He was completely relaxed then.

Despite the Government's response to the Select Committee, particularly in paragraph 44, we should not kid ourselves that these people are shrinking violets and have to be protected when they come before Select Committees. They are well armed and highly educated men and women, as they have to be. Therefore, it is nonsense for the Government to suggest that they need a great deal of protection. These people often have a responsibility for considerable budgets, and Select Committees should be able to probe them.

We come now to the activities of the Attorney-General. This is not the first debate that we have had on these affairs. I was most interested in the remarks made in an Adjournment debate on 24 July by the right hon. and learned member for Southport (Sir I. Percival). He spoke in defence of the Attorney-General's actions in granting immunity and in defence of the phraseology used by the Attorney-General when he said that there was no reason why he should pursue anyone in the courts because of his actions in this affair.

To clarify the actions of the Attorney-General, we need a clear statement from him on exactly what was said to him by Sir Robert Armstrong before he granted immunity. Was the Attorney-General told that the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks was taking full responsibility, and was the right hon. and learned Gentleman named in these conversations, thus enabling the Attorney-General to give clearance?

Mr. Dalyell: Some civil servants, one of whom, if *The Times* is to be believed, is Miss Colette Bowe, have stored away in bank vaults their version of events. If the civil servants' version did not differ significantly from that of the Government, why did they go to the trouble of doing that?

Mr. Douglas: That is a matter for Miss Colette Bowe or anybody else, perhaps my hon. Friend, to comment on, if he thinks fit. However, it is clear that Sir Robert Armstrong's notes will be available, or could be available, to the House if it presses the matter of these investigations. It would be worth while for the Select Committee to probe exactly what procedures he undertook on the inquiry.

The Chairman of the Committee, the right hon. Member for Spelthorne, to the best of my knowledge, in his remarks to the House, did not repeat what the Committee said in a press release a week ago. He said that we saw no reason to modify anything that we had said in the report. Therefore, these reports in totality, and particularly the fourth report, are an indictment of the Government's approach to Select Committees and how they behave towards the House. In particular, they are an indictment of the Prime Minister's form of government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation, and I appeal for the co-operation of those right hon. and hon. Members who are fortunate enough to be called.

7.5 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): In its earlier stages the debate concentrated on defence matters, but increasingly it has concentrated on the Government's reply to the report from the Select Committee on Defence and, in particular, its conclusions.

I feel it important that the content of those paragraphs should be correctly analysed, for they deal, in the widest possible terms, with the question of accountability. The reply concludes by saying:

"the Government proposes to make it clear to civil servants giving evidence to Select Committees that they should not answer questions which are or appear to be directed to the conduct of themselves or of other named individual civil servants."

It is unfortunate that that statement should be made in reply to this report because, as the House knows, the Treasury and Civil Service Committee reported on these issues in May and the Government's reply to that report was published on the same day as the report on Westland from the Select Committee on Defence. At that stage, there was no mention of the introduction of this idea, and to introduce it now and muddle it up in this debate is wrong.

It is right that we should be discussing this matter on the Adjournment, but I make it clear—I believe this is the view throughout the House—that the vote should in no way be taken to endorse those final paragraphs of the Government's reply. If that is not so, the Government most assuredly must make that clear—and if it were so, they would be defeated.

This sudden proposal has been made at short notice, with no consultation, and raises matters of the greatest interest and concern to the House, and in particular to the Select Committees. The right way forward is for the Treasury and Civil Service Committee to consider not only the Government's response to its report but the broad-ranging issues, and report again to the House. In due course, as appropriate, the Liaison Committee can consider what the implications are for the Select Committees, because they are serious. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will accept that this is not a satisfactory way to proceed. It is described as a proposal and should be treated as a proposal, and carefully reconsidered before anything further is done about it. I hope that my right hon. Friend can give us an assurance about that. There must be further discussion and analysis of this matter.

I stress the extent of common ground. In their reply to our seventh report, the Government endorsed the Committee's two basic propositions on accountability—that Ministers and not officials are responsible and accountable for policy and that officials' advice to Ministers is, and should remain, confidential. There is no dispute about that, and Committees operate well on that basis. If it is a matter of policy, the civil servant can say, "I am very sorry but I cannot answer that—it is a matter for the Minister." If the civil servant is asked what advice he gave the Minister, he can reply, "I am sorry, but I cannot tell you." All Select Committees accept that. The disagreement lies on the very narrow, but extremely important, point of whether civil servants should answer for their actions—or what the Government described in their response as their conduct. I believe their conduct and their actions are the same. Clearly, that is something that the House has a responsibility to investigate.

I want to comment on one or two of the arguments — if such they be — in the Government's response. Paragraph 41 states:

"Select Committees exercise their formal powers to inquire into the policies and actions of Departments by virtue of the accountability of Ministers to Parliament."

If we consider that carefully, the sentence is nonsense. It continues:

"Civil servants who appear before them do so as representatives of and subject to the instructions of the Minister."

That is a non sequitur. In any case, however we read those sentences they are wrong. That is not the reason why the House had authority to look into these matters. Select Committees exercise their formal powers to inquire into the policies and actions of Departments because Parliament is sovereign and it has established Select Committees to monitor Government Departments, and has given them the traditional powers to send for persons and papers. It is presumptuous for the Government's reply to be couched in the terms that were used.

There are conventions on the way in which those powers should be exercised. If a witness refuses to appear, he may be formally summoned to do so by the Committee. If that does not succeed, the Committee must come to the Floor of the House. The proposal before us is wrong. It is likely to be ineffective because it would not have changed the way in which a Committee can operate. It can still come to the Floor of the House and insist on calling that witness.

We can trace cases of this kind back over the centuries. There is no way in which a reply as an obiter dictum to a Commitee report can undermine that position. The reality is that Committees act sensibly in their use of privilege. There is no modern instance of a Select Committee using its formal powers to force a civil servant to answer a question. Even if the powers were abused, Ministers can still defend their case on the Floor of the House. There is no argument to support that statement in the reply to the report of the Select Committee on Defence, and that should be recognised.

We should also note the final sentence of the motion in the previous debate on 15 January 1986; which states that the House

"recognises the competence of departmental Select Committees of the House of Commons to consider the issues raised by these developments."

That clearly includes the actions of civil servants. How can we now be told that the Government do not

"believe that a Select Committee is a suitable instrument for inquiring into or passing judgment upon the actions or conduct of an individual civil servant."

I am severely restricted by time; it is difficult to deal with these matters in 10 minutes. I endorse what has already been said. Clearly, the proposal would undermine the work of the Public Accounts Committee, the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Privileges Committee. Is it seriously suggested that this doctrine should apply to the Privileges Committee if it wished to investigate a specific matter? There should not be two classes of Committee, some with rights to examine and others without.

It is very important that we should stress that the Government, in referring to a recommendation from the report of the 1977-78 Select Committee on Procedure that it would not be appropriate for the House to go directly below the level of Ministers, ignores the context in which the statement was made. The context was that the Committee should have the right to send for Ministers without returning to the Floor of the House. We should not go around making selective quotations of that kind. I do not know who was responsible for drafting the reply, but it was badly drafted and the whole matter must be reconsidered.

Finally, much reference has been made to Crichel Down and there is a great deal of misunderstanding about that. That doctrine was largely set out by the Home Secretary in the debate on that matter. He distinguished various cases: the case where the official is directly under the instructions of the Minister; the case where the official is dealing with the policy as enunciated by the Minister. In those cases, the Minister must defend and protect the official. There is a third case, in which the individual may have done something wrong which was not too serious. In that case the Minister explains and takes the necessary action. It is stressed in the Crichel Down doctrine that the action of a civil servant which is outside the policy or disapproved of by the Minister, of which he knew nothing, does not mean that the Minister must defend him. In those circumstances there is no reason why he should not be named.

As was stated in the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report, we must ensure that there is accountability to the House. I believe that that important argument must be considered by the House. Given that latest development, it is important for the House eventually to express a view on the matter—I hope with the Government's agreement.

It is curious that paragraph 44 of the reply sets out various reasons why it might be a mistake for named officials to reply to questions about their affairs and about specific civil servants. I do not believe that it is true that in the present circumstances the reputation of the civil servant concerned has been protected by an internal inquiry that has not been made public — a bland statement by Ministers that there is nothing to worry about and disciplinary action will not be necessary. Nor do I believe that that constitutes accountability to the House. It is vital that that accountability should be maintained and that the rights of Select Committees be preserved.

I commend to my right hon. Friend paragraph 3.18 of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report, which states:

"We are not satisfied that a private internal inquiry which is not fully reported to Parliament constitutes accountability . . . We do not find this a convincing argument. The officials concerned might well have welcomed an opportunity to explain their actions in public (which would not, we stress, have been in conflict with the confidential nature of advice to Ministers). It would also have enabled Parliament to consider who was responsible for any mistakes and who ought to have been held accountable."

The Committee's conclusion in paragraph 3.19 is clear. In addition to accountability, it states,

"We invite and recommend that the Government and other interested parties should produce for reconsideration specific proposals on how the crucial question of accountability should be dealt with in future."

I believe that that is the right constructive response to accountability, rather than the kind of response to accountability that the Government have produced. I hope that my right hon. Friend will succeed in ensuring that that is the way in which matters will proceed.

7.18 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I want to express my gratitude to the Select Committee on Defence. I hope that the House will forgive me if I concentrate on two questions that remain unanswered. In my view they are, and remain, the key questions.

I put these questions to the Leader of the House in the course of his reply to a debate on 27 January. I hope that he will answer my questions now. First, did the Prime Minister canvass, with her advisers or any Minister, before she requested through her office, that the Solicitor-General should write his letter and the possibility of the letter being put into the public domain?

I believe that the closely drafted replies given by the Prime Minister as to her state of knowledge after the letter was written do not deal with her state of knowledge before the letter was written. If two Ministers, and more so a Minister and his servants, or the Prime Minister and a Minister, contemplate and agree one course of action, short of some dramatic change of circumstance, it would be improbable for the inferior in rank to go back to the superior for reaffirmation of the authority already given. Hence I venture to suggest that frequently the wrong question has been put to the Prime Minister. She had already agreed to what was to be a flagrant breach of constitutional properties before the Solicitor-General was requested to write his letter. It was a put-up job, as far as the Solicitor-General was concerned, the moment the idea was conceived and agreed upon.

Following a negative reply from the Prime Minister to my questions, I sent a long letter to her setting out my assertion that she had not answered my questions. I gave detailed references from *Hansard*. The letter is published in the evidence that is contained in the Select Committee's report. The Prime Minister replied that she had already given a full account of the circumstances.

I now put to the House additional matters to demonstrate why I believe that the Prime Minister had agreed beforehand the course of action that was taken. The Solicitor-General signed the letter at 11.15. The Department of Trade and Industry officials, including the head of information, first saw the letter at 1 pm. The Select Committee reported that the fact that the head of information had been alerted suggested that before Ministers were consulted, officials had in mind some public use of this information. It was the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) who said that it should go into the public domain and that No. 10 should be consulted. It had to be subject to the agreement of No. 10.

As for the differences in understanding between four officials at No.10 and the DTI, the Select Committee says that it is not impossible that four such officials should have been capable of identical misunderstandings. The Prime Minister repeated that the reason for disclosure was to get accurate information into the public domain.

At 2 o'clock Miss Bowe gave details to the Press Association. It was the Government's view that the giving of extracts of the Solicitor-General's letter was the only way to correct inaccuracies. No wonder the Select Committee found that it was quite extraordinary that five senior civil servants accepted this, apparently without demur. Westland had been told by telephone, in any event, and Sir John Cuckney stated that it made no difference to his press conference. No wonder the Select Committee says:

"the reason given by the Prime Minister for releasing the information to the Press Association begins to look flimsy, to say the least."

It is odd that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was not asked about it on either Saturday 4 January or Sunday 5 January, or invited to correct the misinformation that apparently he had provided.

The Select Committee found that the Government's reasoning was "unusual and sometimes bizarre." I agree with its finding. It is strange that nobody rang the Solicitor-General to explain the compelling need to correct the misinformation. He might have said that he could not reach a firm conclusion. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks would not say why the Solicitor-General had not been told. The question remains unanswered. If, as the Government suggest, they are satisfied that those concerned acted in good faith, surely there can be no objection now to answering the question.

I make five specific points. First, in evidence Sir Robert Armstrong said that he had spoken to the Prime Minister and to the former Secretary of State and that he was in a position to confirm that there had been no prior clearance. He said that he had made other inquiries but he refused to state what they were. Apart from that, there is no other evidence to contradict my assertion.

Secondly, the value of Sir Robert's evidence is undermined first by the former Secretary of State's evidence—he clearly skirts around the issue and he has refused to answer specific questions on this point—and secondly by the Prime Minister's refusal to answer at all.

Thirdly, is it likely that Miss Bowe would have been present at a meeting without there being a clear presumption that there would be a public interface? Would officials, or even the Minister in particular in view of his legal experience, have contemplated using the letter without prior authority from the Prime Minister?

Fourthly, the Prime Minister's considered replies do nothing to rebut this inference. She said:

"I was not consulted at the time."

That leaves open the implication that she was consulted at an earlier stage.

Fifthly, other than as part of a plan that was conceived to discredit the right hon. Member for Henley, why was the Solicitor-General's opinion obtained in the first place on what was essentially a simple question as to whether or not two letters were or were not consistent? Any DTI official could have answered that question. The ability to read is not confined to lawyers. The inference must be that the Solicitor-General was used to provide clout, and that clout had to be delivered in public. The evidence seems to suggest, or at the very least does not controvert, the suggestion that the matter had been canvassed before the wheels were set in motion.

My second question was, and is, this: when the Prime Minister agreed to the setting up of the inquiry, did she know at that stage, or have reason to believe, that it was an official leak? Was it a bogus inquiry from her point of view? Was it a put-up job on the Prime Minister's part from the beginning? Was it something to buy off the Attorney-General?

This question is also outstanding. Despite telling the House on numerous occasions what she did not know until the inquiry reported, she has repeatedly failed to say what

she did know when she instigated the inquiry. In particular, she has never clarified what the communications in "general terms" between her office and the DTI were.

The Select Committee expressed surprise that, despite the fact that Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham knew what had happened, the Prime Minister was not told. Furthermore, they expressly assert that Sir Robert knew that the disclosure had been authorised when he commenced his inquiry. It is a little hard to believe that the Prime Minister was not told that until 22 January when she said:

"An enormous number of the facts were not known to me until yesterday".—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 455-456.]

Details, yes; the broad statement that it was all along an an official leak, no. The reality is that the Prime Minister could not answer, and that she cannot answer, the second question without prejudicing her position on the first.

If all acted in good faith, why should there not be a full and fresh disclosure now? To repeat the parrot cry that she has given a full account to which she has nothing to add is the repetitive denial, so often experienced, of someone who has no answer to make to a charge. The failure to answer these basic questions is a blot on the honour and integrity of the Prime Minister. Paragraph 183 does not exonerate her. It limits her to the knowledge on 6 January of direct action and what her office was doing on that day. It is a very limited conclusion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the right hon. and learned Member to end his speech.

Mr. Morris: Is it too late, in the face of the evidence, to ask for an answer to these questions?

7.29 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I speak as a member of the Select Committee who has taken a very close interest in the inquiry. I attended all 39 of the evidence-taking and deliberative sessions, save one on the day that my daughter was born. Therefore, I have a deep interest in the future of the Select Committee system. I speak also as one who was not consulted on the creation of the Select Committees in their present form because I was not a Member of the previous Parliament. Therefore I hope that the House will forgive me if I deal mainly with the constitutional points that have been raised today.

It is an attractive crusade that represents indignant Back Benchers against a recalcitrant and secretive Executive and is about the rights of Back Benchers to receive the fullest possible information from civil servants. However, there are some difficulties in this rosy scenario and I should like to outline them. Our legislature is very different from the United States Congress or from any parliament created by a written constitution. Like our common law, it has evolved slowly by precedent into what is largely an adversarial affair conducted on the Floor of this Chamber. It is conducted in the full blaze of publicity and before all Members of Parliament if they choose to attend.

Some people have argued that such notions are outdated and too partisan and shallow for the work of Parliament in overseeing the complexities of modern government. In that context I am thinking of what Shirley Williams said in her book. Despite that, our Parliament is a uniquely exciting and vibrant assembly, though admittedly the competition from our sister democratic assemblies is rather abysmal. Anybody visiting parliaments abroad or staring down from the public gallery at the sheer tedium of the United States Congress would bear witness to the peculiar character and dramatic effect of this House in full cry. In the debates about Westland and in the questions and statements, we saw that side of the character of the House brought out to full effect.

The tradition which sustains the cut and thrust in this House is based on the necessity of Ministers to be accountable in the fullest sense as Members of this House or of the other place. Nothing bore this out to more effect than the dramatic resignation of two Cabinet Ministers at the height of the Westland affair. We do not have a banc des ministres as in the Assemblie Nationale in Paris, filled with dry technocrats recruited from the universities or from big business and brought in to make formal orations from some tribune of the people in front of a semi-circular assembly.

Unlike the United States, we do not have a chief executive who comes down once a year from some Olympian height to give a state of the union address. Ours is a remarkable achievement nurtured by long centuries of development, tradition and precedent. It is all too easy to destroy those long years of achievement in the span of one Parliament. In that context I rely on the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) that there is nothing innovative in the Government's response to the report that I signed.

Let us look again at the campaign for Parliament's rights that we have heard about in this debate. We are told that those rights are encompassed in the alleged wrongs inflicted on Select Committees by the Government's response to the Defence Committee's report. That response is contained in paragraph 44 and I shall not repeat the wording of the paragraph. Civil servants should not be required to answer questions about their conduct. If we look at the Government's response we will see that we are not being asked to question whether civil servants should be answerable for administrative affairs or policy. We are simply dealing with matters of conduct.

As I have said, the tradition that gives our Parliament so much of its colour and vigour is based on the concept of ministerial responsibility on the Floor of the House. Anything that detracts from that duel of wits over the Dispatch Box detracts in a real sense from Parliament itself. To the extent to which some Members who happen to be members of a Select Committee are given an even larger role, so is the role of all Members diminished.

Sadly, the role of this Chamber has already been diminished. We know the reasons for that and many of those reasons are inevitable. We should hesitate carefully before attempting to turn Select Committees into the kind of powerful instrument that they are in the American Congress, because that would hasten the flight of interest from this Chamber. However, Select Committees have a role to play. It is to question and dig away at the kind of detail that we cannot possibly scrutinise on the Floor of the House. Select Committees fall down in attempting to tackle items of acute party political controversy. That is not a criticism of the members of Select Committees because, as in the Committee that looked into the Westland affair, there is no choice. The duty is placed on the Select Committee by Parliament as a whole.

Inevitably, in inquiries into areas of acute controversy, the members of Select Committees, once the evidence has

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been taken, are faced with three kinds of report. They can support the Government line outright, criticise it but not too much, or oppose the Government line outright and support what the Opposition parties have said in the House. The first and third courses serve no purpose; they would simply result in the Committee aping what has been said in the House. All the pressure on Committee members, and the only sensible approach, is to devise a report that mildly criticises the Government and suggests some mild reform or other, perferably a little to the left or right of what one side or the other is saying. That is the kind of report that a Select Committee usually signs.

The result of that is that the newspapers are pleased and the headline writers can say, "All-party report criticises Government". That is news. The Opposition are pleased because they can go along to the Tea Room and tell their colleagues that they have persuaded Government Members to hammer the Government. Government Members of the Committee are pleased because they can say to themselves that they are men of conscience and principle and perhaps that is why they have not been promoted. The result is that everybody is pleased.

As we have heard, in many respects the Westland report was masterly, but of course it fell into that category. I make no apologies for that. We had no less than 24 prolonged and hard deliberative sessions. I have no intention of reporting to the House what went on in those private sessions but a shrewd observer might conclude that some Labour members of the Committee might have wanted to go further and that I might not have wanted to go so far. Politics being the art it is, we made compromises. I put my name to the report and I stand by that because it is a well balanced attempt to set out in great detail the history of the Westland affair.

Perhaps that provides me with an opportunity to depart from the constitutional issues at stake and to emphasise the significance of paragraph 183. I need not labour the point about the paragraph because it has frequently been made during the debate. That paragraph exonerates the Prime Minister from any blame or involvement in this affair. It is not good enough for the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) to dig away and to say that perhaps we did not discuss that matter. The hon. Gentleman put his name to a report containing paragraph 183 and that absolves the Prime Minister from any blame. In that sense I view the report as satisfactory. Like all reports from Select Committees to which everybody puts his name, I accept that it is necessarily a compromise.

By giving Select Committees more power we would wean power away from the Chamber and I would regret that. Select Committees are best advised to deal with matters that are not central to the party political stage of the moment. We should take care before dramatically increasing the powers of Select Committees, because that would bypass the traditional responsibility of Ministers to the House. To allow them to interview civil servants in their Departments or perhaps in their private offices, not just on matters of administration or policy but on their competence, would be a dangerous step. That is why I welcome the Government's response to the report.

7.38 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I shall not follow the line taken by the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), because I found his speech somewhat convoluted and generalised. Perhaps it was designed to take attention away from the embarrassing details that have been so cogently and perceptively illuminated in speeches by hon. Members from both sides.

I am sure hon. Members will appreciate that I wish to speak rather more to the third report than to the fourth. I shall do so, wishing now, as I wished throughout the Westland crisis, that the probity of the Government and the future of Westland could be separated. The problems of Westland plc and the effect that they have on my constituency and on the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) are worthy of discussion in their own right, and that has all too frequently been obscured by the broader constitutional debate.

I agree with other right hon. and hon. Members that Westland's position is now—it has to be said, and I am glad to say it — immeasurably stronger than it was earlier this year. The capital base of the company has been restored, an excellent working relationship has been established with its new partners, Sikorsky and Fiat, the licence to produce the Black Hawk has been negotiated, and the first Black Hawk aircraft produced in Yeovil will roll out of the aircraft hangers next year.

Contrary to the dire prophecies made by those who wished to give strength to their own positions earlier this year, European co-operation on helicopter production has proceeded without check and apace. The profitability of the company has risen and continues to rise, and morale among the work force is improving, even if communications within the company have not always been as good as many of us would have liked.

In short, Westland has now taken steps which should assure its long-term viability, without a single penny of cost to the taxpayer. It would be wrong to say that this has been done without cost to jobs, production and morale, and to the ability of management to control the situation. One cannot threaten the whole future of a company, as the Government have done, without doing some damage. However, the strength of the company has prevailed, not least because of its excellent leadership and the unity of purpose and commitment of its work force.

Westland has therefore fulfilled its part of the bargain, despite an almost criminal level of neglect of its problems by the Government in the latter part of last year, and despite being treated as a political football by some of the most powerful in the land in the early part of this year. I wish I could say bluntly that the Government had fulfilled their part in the reconstruction of Westland's future, but I can make no such statement. The future of helicopter policy in Britain, and with it the future of Westland, remains shrouded in uncertainty. None of that has been lifted by the opaque and vague speech of the Secretary of State for Defence, who merely rehashed statements made in the past and did not provide the signposts that we need for the future.

We are told that the helicopter review now in progress should be completed by the end of November, at which time it will be considered by the Secretary of State. If I welcome that review, it is not without a degree of scepticism.

The Secretary of State said that we should not rush into these matters, but we have been trying to formulate a helicopter policy for this country for 17 years. During this period Westland has had to muddle through as best it can,

without a clear idea of what the Government wanted in the long term. The Select Committee on Defence called for the present review to be completed by the autumn so that the Secretary of State could take a view by the end of the year. It appears from the Secretary of State's speech that that will not happen. I repeat the view of the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) who said that if it were to appear late, and especially later next year, that might prove too late for thousands of jobs and for the future viability of Westland as a major helicopter manufacturer.

All those in the know are indicating that the current review will offer nothing substantial about future helicopter policy and will be bland in its recommendations. The most likely proposals put to Ministers are, it seems, to run on the Wessex and Puma aircraft—something at which the Secretary of State hinted—and to order no further helicopters until the EH101 is in production. I must say to the Secretary of State in the clearest terms possible that any such recommendation will be bad for Her Majesty's forces, a severe blow to Britain's aerospace industry and damaging to exports and could be potentially devastating for Westland.

The decision for the Secretary of State is essentially a political one. He will, first, have to consider what is best for the armed forces. The central issue is to clarify the Government's policy towards helicopters in the land battle. The Government must fulful the requirements stated in AST 404 and not dodge them. I accept, and Westland accepts, that there may be a number of solutions to that problem—the Black Hawk, the EH101 or the Lynx. The only decision that is wholly unacceptable is that no decision be taken, and the future once again be fudged.

With the United States and the USSR both taking steps to expand their air mobility through the increased use of helicopters, it cannot make sense for Britain to be moving in the opposite direction. The United Kingdom armed services helicopter fleet has declined by nearly 8 per cent. since 1979, while all other armed forces are increasing theirs. United States sources have calculated that the British Army on the Rhine is now 100 helicopters light on its actual needs within the mobile war which NATO is planning to fight. The Government seem to fail to recognise what all other Governments have seen so clearly, that with diminishing manpower resources, and in the face of a numerically stronger Soviet force, helicopters have a unique role to play as a force multiplier.

With current helicopter resources, it takes four to five hours to airlift a British Army battalion, whereas the USA and USSR can airlift a whole brigade in much less time. The problem with our helicopters on the central front is not just with their quantity, but with their quality. The Army still depends on ancient RAF Wessex, the oldest helicopter fleet in the world. If it was right to replace the Royal Navy Wessex 5 with the new Sea King 4 for the Royal Marines, why is it not right to replace the Wessex on the central front also?

Next, the Secretary of State must consider the impact of his plans on the British aerospace industry. There is discussion about the possible purchase of the Boeing Chinook heavy lift helicopters. Has the Secretary of State no idea of how damaging that decision would be to the United Kingdom helicopter industry and its aerospace suppliers? How could such a decision line up with the Government's previously declared support for the EH101? Why are the Government continuing to equivocate on the NH90 project? Given the amount of taxpayers' money already sunk into this future aircraft, the Government must recognise that re-inventing the Super Puma as a collaborative venture would throw away investment, waste export opportunities and undoubtedly destroy jobs.

Let me turn, finally, to the impact on Westland itself. I should remind the House that Westland is the provider of 9,000 high technology jobs, not just in my constituency but in that of my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Isle of Wight and in that of the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), and also in other areas. As 70 per cent. of the value of a modern helicopter is brought in from outside, Westland is the purchaser of a large amount of aerospace equipment from up and down Britain. As such it is a key component in Britain's aerospace industry, as well as being our nation's only helicopter manufacturer.

What Westland needs most at present is a decision. It is the uncertainty imposed by Government shilly-shallying and indecision which has so sapped morale and created difficulties for management. Therefore, I ask the Secretary of State to give a clear decision as soon as possible so that Westland's future can be planned. We do not need the £1 million which the Government seem prepared to put into Rover, or the kind of money which they were prepared to use to bail out their friends in Johnson Matthey. Indeed, we are not asking for any money. Westland is not asking for charity—we never have. We are asking only for a clear idea of what the Government want, so that we can get ahead and plan how best to meet the nation's needs. Surely that is not asking too much?

Above all, my plea to the Secretary of State is to give us a decision and to be clear about it. It would be wrong to suggest that there are not some decisions that are preferable to others. While the long-term future of Westland is now assured with the EH101 project, the short term remains a cause for considerable concern.

The worst scenario of all would be no decision, but the second worst would be a decision where the Government sought to run on our decrepit and ancient helicopters for the Army without replacement. It seems that this is what the Secretary of State is considering. If we were to do that, we should have to lay off, in the face of the trough in the work that Westland has until the end of this decade, one of Westland's most priceless assets—its design teams. We should not only have to pay for those redundancies, but we should have to re-recruit that staff in the early 1990s. The Secretary of State and all hon. Members must know that, with the present technology skill gap in our country, that would be very difficult.

In short, what is at risk is nothing less than Westland's survival, not as a company—as the Secretary of State has said, it is strong enough to diversify—but as a major helicopter manufacturer in its own right.

We all know the difficulties which the Government are facing over this matter. Trident is causing this cut in defence expenditure. We all know that Westland may be a casualty of that. That obsession has caused the current situation.

Westland has been dealt with ill by this Government over the past three years. It was first ignored and then treated as a political shuttlecock. It now deserves better from the Department of Trade and Industry and from the Government. Westland has played its part, and I hope that the Minister will now play his.

The shilly-shallying, indecision and mismanagement which have been the chief characteristics of the

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Government's approach to this great company must now stop. The future prosperity of the community which I represent, thousands of jobs and the defence of this nation now depend upon it.

7.49 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) spoilt his speech with such political rubbish at its end. However, I agree that the nation needs a clear helicopter policy. The nation and Somerset both need a strong and prosperous Westland company and I am sure that, under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that is exactly what we have and will have.

Limited for time, I rise to make a single point. The Government's response to the Select Committee's report adopts an astonishing position in relation to accountability. It proposes, in effect, that it is for the Government, not Parliament, in future to decide the scope of Select Committees inquiries into their work. Such a doctrine in our democracy must be promptly rejected.

The political division in Britain and in the House between Socialists and Conservatives — the political battle, indeed — part ideological, part practical, is whether the state's involvement in our national life should be greater in extent or less. What unites us, or at least the Back Benchers, is the duty, whatever the extent of that involvement may be, to ensure that the actions of the Executive — the Government — are brought under an effective and continuous scrutiny. That is what the electors trust us to do. They also trust us to establish methods by which we can, in this modern complex age, achieve it.

Before the 1979 general election, the Conservative party pledged itself to

"seek to make it"—

Parliament—

"effective in its job of controlling the Executive."

Thereafter, the new departmentally related Select Committees were established, approved and supported by the whole House. It was the intention, the then Leader of the House said, to

"redress the balance of power between Whitehall and Westminster".

Full co-operation was promised in the name of the Government. The Leader of the House said that

"the objective of the new Committee structure would be to strengthen the accountability of Ministers"

He went on:

"Each Committee will be able to examine the whole range of activity for which its Minister or Ministers have direct responsibility."

Thus, full co-operation was pledged on the part of the Government. The Committees were given wide powers to send for persons and papers. On those clear, specific assurances the Government now, apparently, seek, almost casually, to renege. That is unacceptable.

It is generally agreed that the Select Committee system has been a success. Daylight has been brought into the decision-making process. There has been a new career opportunity for Members of Parliament away from the dominance of the parties. There has been a platform for Ministers and civil servants to explain, debate and discuss policies. There has been more information for Members of Parliament and our debates have been better informed in consequence. In sum, the establishment of the Committees has been an important constitutional advance. We still have some distance to go. Control of money is what we must take in the House; when we first refuse to vote money, we shall have begun to exercise real authority.

But suddenly now the Government say that they intend to change the rules of the game with regard to all Government evidence to all Select Committees. Yet the words they use at the end of their reply to the Select Committee on Defence simply do not stand up in the case of the Public Accounts Committee, the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, and so on. It is charitable to assume that the reply simply has not been thought through. I particularly regret it because, until now, the Government's attitude to the new Select Committees has, on the whole, been exemplary.

The creation of the Committees in 1979 will always be looked back on as an historic decision, from which the House and the country have benefited greatly. There have been many cases since then when there have been disagreements, and perhaps friction, between the two sides, but by and large they have gradually been settled in a sensible House of Commons way with compromise on both sides. In my experience of four years, if my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) will allow me to say so as his predecessor, the first Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the Liaison Select Committee, I do not recall one instance of real difficulty. It is against the grain of that happy experience that the Government have now acted so rashly, and they have done so on the basis of a single case which cannot be considered typical of Select Committee work.

What is to be done? Frankly, the report must be withdrawn. Nothing else will do. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing is right to arrange for the Liaison Committee to consider the situation and I hope that the Procedure Select Committee will do so also. I hope that both Committees will publish their views and that they will be strong and clear.

Make no mistake about what is at stake in this matter. It is of the utmost importance. The Government have given in the paper their reply to the modest observations of a Select Committee of the House — that they will henceforward limit the effectiveness and authority of Parliament. "Be damned if you will," would be my comment. "And so say all of us," I hope will be the echo in all quarters of the House. Any Government are the servant of our people and never their master. Parliament, the people's elected representatives in the House, must be sovereign in its own House. The scope of the authority of Parliament is for Parliament to decide, not for some ministerial diktat to propose.

Who wrote this anonymous rubbish? Which Minister or Ministers approved it? They should come here and apologise to us. Nothing ever should interrupt or curtail the right of elected Members of Parliament to criticise, to inquire, to investigate, to expose inefficiency, waste, incompetence or corruption, or even to praise when praise is due, as it so often is.

If the debate, curtailed as it has so unfortunately been, refreshes and re-emphasises that constitutional right, that constitutional duty, it will have been well worth while.

7.56 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On 18 November 1985 I visited Westland at Yeovil. Taken round by Bill Gueterbock and shop stewards, I was told of the

company's plight and its need for orders and of the lack of interest from Ministers. Therefore, I shall be acquitted of lack of concern about the British helicopter industry and the charge of simply making political mischief. When I was in Yeovil in November last year, the company was desperate to get Ministers to look at its problems.

If I concentrate on the Law Officer's letter, it is not, to borrow Brian Redhead's dismissive phrase this morning, about "Westminster shenanigans"; it is about the integrity of the British Government.

Like the rest of us, I am a party politician. But, above that in certain matters, I am a child of the House of Commons and party can come second. I care about how the House is treated by Ministers, however exalted they are. My Front Bench knows that I was critical of the shadow Cabinet for not asking the shadow Attorney-General to open the debate and requiring the presence of one of the dramatis personae to answer—the Attorney-General himself.

I begin with a direct question which I hope will be answered when the Minister replies or in response to the first oral question on Monday.

Under the byline of that careful, well-informed and trustworthy political correspondent, John Lewis, known and held in respect over the years by many of us, on the front page of the *Sunday Telegraph* on 27 July 1986 there appeared the words:

"Havers threat to call police to No. 10."

The Attorney-General was compelled to warn Sir Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary, at the height of the Westland affair that he would have the police on the doorstep of No. 10 Downing street next morning unless he agreed to an immediate leaks inquiry. Is Mr. Lewis writing the truth, or is it without foundation? I believe it to be true. If so, what is the explanation of the senior Law Officer of the Crown threatening to bring the constabulary to No. 10?

On 14 July 1986, I asked the Attorney-General:

"Surely the usual practice is that Law Officers' letters are treated with extreme discretion and most gingerly by the Downing street machine. Why did the Solicitor-General's letter ever go near Mr. Ingham and the press office, unless there was a prime ministerial instruction that it was to be leaked?"

The answer was:

"I am quite certain that there was no such instruction." —[*Official Report*, 14 July 1986; Vol. 101, c. 675.]

I believe that the Attorney-General was telling the truth in his own mind when he gave that answer. Does he still believe that to be true? At column 851, on 25 July, I had the lucky opportunity in an Adjournment debate to set out for 30 minutes my detailed concern about the Law Officer's letter. In reply, the Minister's answer was bland and anodyne. But in three months, no attempt has been made to answer my questions.

For more than 24 years as a Member of the House I have seen Ministers of Governments of both major parties go. Some of the resignation correspondence has been sad and pained as between old party colleagues, some has been curt, bordering on the acrimonious; but never, during a quarter of a century in the House, have I read of such correspondence as that between the Prime Minister and her departing Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. *The Daily Telegraph* of 25 January 1986 printed a letter from the Prime Minister to the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, which ended:

"I hope that it will not be long before you return to high office to continue your Ministerial career."

How could the Prime Minister say that, if the complete picture was of a Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who had deceived his senior civil servants, his Cabinet colleagues and his Prime Minister for 14 days? She said that because it was a negotiated correspondence. Had such a letter not been forthcoming, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) might have refused to carry the can and act as a prime ministerial scapegoat. He could negotiate. He could spill the prime ministerial beans. He held the ace, king, and queen of trumps.

I make no apology for quoting from Mr. Peter Hennessy's article in the *New Statesman* because I have some sympathy for the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks. It states:

"Pressure from Conservative Back-Benchers forced Leon Brittan to follow Heseltine out of the Government, not the requirements of Ministerial responsibility. The need to preserve the position of the Prime Minister, and not constitutional doctrine led the Conservative majority on the Commons Defence Committee to 'clear' Thatcher."

Simon Jenkins' article stated that passages had to be negotiated with Leon Brittan, lest he step out of line in the debate.

Parliament should not be content with being given a line. Hon. Members are entitled to the truth. If we are content simply to be spun a line, we are not doing our jobs properly.

I set out the narrative in columns 851 to 858 on 25 July. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks could show that before 6 January — before an unsuspecting Solicitor-General was prompted by No. 10 to write the letter—the Prime Minister had set down the guidelines for the strategy. Perhaps there was no need for consultation. Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell knew exactly what they had to do before the innocent Solicitor-General ever put pen to paper. If the civil servants were not carrying out the Prime Minister's orders, they should be punished. If she is not prepared to punish them, the Prime Minister should admit that they were carrying out her orders.

Sir Robert Armstrong's subsequent refusal to discipline any of the civil servants directly involved must be wholly unsatisfactory. The only reason for not disciplining them was that the Cabinet Secretary knew full well that it was not the more junior civil servants but the politicians that were guilty. Mr. Ingham refused, under orders, to give evidence to the Select Committee, and he is criticised for his central role in masterminding the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter. If he masterminded the leak of a Law Officer's letter, he should be sacked; he should not bask, as he is doing, in prime ministerial favour.

The Prime Minister has always claimed that her officials acted without her knowledge and that she did not know the full circumstances of how the leak occurred until nearly a fortnight after the event. Anyone reading the report of the Select Committee on Defence must regard that as a fairy tale. The raison d'etre of the letter was to leak it to discredit the former Secretary of State for Defence. The only reason for persuading the Solicitor-General to write the letter was to leak it.

Adam Raphael, quoting, a former Conservative Cabinet Minister, said:

"It is a perfectly simple story of straightforward dishonesty"

I do not know Mr. Raphael's source, but I give the House my word of honour that three Conservative Privy

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

Councillors—I shall not betray their names—who are political opponents but friends and colleagues of mine for more than 20 years, have separately said much the same thing.

When pressed, the Prime Minister blames the professional competence—"misunderstandings"—of civil servants. But paragraph 15 of Cmnd. 9841, the Government's response to the seventh report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, states:

"The principle is clear: Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the policies and actions of their Departments."

Pressed further, the Prime Minister authorises an inquiry, but it is an inquiry into that which she herself has set up.

Simon Jenkins states that the Prime Minister is protected by adopting the doctrine of proportionality—that whatever blame might attach to her for the leak, a prime ministerial resignation would be out of proportion. But the truth is the truth is the truth and lies are lies are lies. If the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and for Defence laid down their political careers, why is it disproportionate that the Prime Minister should lay down hers?

Paragraph 198 shows that on 23 January I asked:

"When did the Prime Minister's press office first tell her what it had done?"

The Prime Minister replied:

"I have said that I was not consulted at the time."

She said that she had given a full account. That is not true. At column 856 on Friday 25 July the narrative of how the Prime Minister organised the Law Officer's letter is spelt out. There was no full account. To say that the Prime Minister did not take part in the leak is a sustained, brazen deception. It is straightforward dishonesty. The House of Commons cannot continue to operate on that basis. Truthfulness in the House is the fulcrum of our system. The Prime Minister is a sustained, brazen deceiver now hiding behind cynical performances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he cannot say that and that he must withdraw that remark about the Prime Minister.

Mr. Dalyell: I say that she is a bounder, a liar, a deceiver, a cheat and a crook.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that he cannot say that. He must either withdraw his remarks or I must invoke the powers invested in me and my responsibilities to the House. I hope that the hon. Gentleman, who is a very experienced parliamentarian, will withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not wish to take up my colleagues' time. Let us carry the matter no further. I stick to my remarks and I know what you must do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In those circumstances, I have no alternative but to exercise the powers vested in me under Standing Order No. 24 and order the hon. Gentleman to withdraw from the House for the remainder of this sitting.

The hon. Member, having used a grossly disorderly expression, was ordered by MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *to withdraw the same, but he declined to comply with that direction, whereupon* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 24 (Disorderly conduct), ordered him to withdraw immediately from the House during the remainder of this day's Sitting, and he withdrew accordingly.*

8.6 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): The speeches by the Opposition remind me of a psychic research society desperately tramping round some old haunted house looking for a ghost. The only ghost that could be found was found by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). He is perfectly correct to state that the problem which started this whole sorry affair some 17 or 18 months ago is still with us. The House knows of my interest in the affairs of Westland plc. It is the largest employer in Weston-super-Mare and it has a crucial role to play in the economy of that area.

Only 30 to 40 per cent. of the modern helicopter is constructed in Yeovil and Weston-super-Mare. The rest of the machine, by value, is built in various parts of the west country and in the industrial centres of Britain. When we previously debated this matter, Westland plc was financially unsound. The Government were not clear as to whether they would assist it. Now, Westland plc is a busy, financially prosperous company. This morning on the wireless, the vice-chairman of Westland plc said that the company was profitable.

I do not wish any of my remarks to be interpreted as casting any aspersions on that aspect of the affair. In the helicopter division, there will not be enough work to maintain the present work force unless orders are received to sustain those factories in 1988-89. The anomaly, as the hon. Member for Yeovil said, is that, having laid off many men from the west country, the company will have to re-employ them, if it can get them, so that the EH101 programme, on which the Royal Navy is so rightly pushing ahead, can proceed.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been kind enough to see me and talk about the matter, and I very much appreciate that. This afternoon, he used friendly words, but took no action. He shelters behind studies. When I was at the Ministry of Defence and asked whether it was morning or afternoon, I was told, "Minister, we'll have to do a study on that." That is a wonderful defence against making a decision. Officials go off and study the matter, and find out what the senior officer wants. That research is then translated down the line into a complicated answer saying just what the senior officer wishes.

After Exercise Lionheart, AST 404 was torn up as if the Army had suddenly discovered that in modern warfare, moving around in large helicopters was a good way of putting troops on the ground. The Americans learnt that in Vietnam and some of us have been advocating it for years. Yet "the experts" are doing a study that has already lasted some months. It will probably overrun, and its conclusions may not support the view held by many of us, that the Army is nowhere near well enough equipped with helicopters. The Royal Navy has led the way, but I shall say something later about the division of responsibilities between the services.

What is the reason for the lack of helicopters? There is unquestionably prejudice. Moreover, those trained in armoured vehicles often believe that that is the only way to fight. The military has displayed a poor flexibility of approach. Thus, the politicians must intervene, because there is no other way of resolving the issue. I remind the House that when Winston Churchill was first First Lord of the Admiralty he invented the tank. During the last war many people went to war on horses and found that after

having the machine gun for nearly 50 years, it was not a frightfully good way of tackling the problems of modern warfare. We are making the same sort of mistake.

I come to the ownership of helicopters. I cannot believe that anybody who has operated helicopters thinks that such a division of responsibility is good. In the Falklands, a company commander needing helicopter support had to apply for it by 5 o'clock the day before. From my amateur knowledge of warfare, I would say that that was an impossible proposition. Indeed, it proved impossible to provide the necessary service.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will probably say that it is all very well for me to say such things, but that what we need to know is where the resources are to come from. I suggest that he should look at the armoured personnel carrier programme that he has just instituted at a cost of nearly £500 million, and at his research budgets. From my experience at the Ministry of Defence I know that where there's a will there's a way. But I share my right hon. Friend's view that it is not the Ministry's job to support British industry. British industry looks to it as its customer, and Westland has constantly emphasised that it will do whatever the Government want it to do. It is not for that company to dictate to the Ministry of Defence.

If the Government believe that the British helicopter industry should be abandoned—I am sorry that there has been no statement to the contrary—the Department of Trade and Industry should dig into its relatively deep pocket and use some of its aid money to get over this temporary aberration. It uses large sums of money for launch aid in aviation projects, assists the car industry, and so on. But the sums that we are talking about are relatively small and would enhance British forces. The challenge would then be for the Ministry of Defence to find the men and the money to run these machines. However, that should not be difficult.

I very much support the Select Committee's recommendation of an aerospace board. In many areas there is conflict between the Ministry of Defence as a purchasing agent and the Department of Trade and Industry as a sponsoring Department, and that leads to confusion within the Government. The Westland affair is a particularly blatant example of that.

I am sorry to tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that in the absence of firm assurances that the philosophy in the Ministry of Defence and in the Department of Trade and Industry has changed, I cannot support the Government tonight, for two reasons. First, there is a serious deficiency in the defence equipment provided to our Army. That is my prime reason for not joining my hon. Friends in the Lobby tonight. Secondly, my conscience would not allow me to let a policy—or lack of policy—proceed that would lead to the laying off of many highly skilled people in an important part of the world, embracing not only my constituency but the west country as a whole. That would go very much against the grain.

8.13 pm

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): It is surprising that so far the Opposition have not said a word about the problems of the helicopter industry or what they propose to do about it. It is even more surprising, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) said, that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) who opened for the Opposition, should say hardly a word about Westland, but should address his remarks almost entirely to the fourth report.

It will come as no surprise when I say that those of my constituents who work at Westland have no interest in that fourth report. They work hard at Westland and are doing a good job. With the help and support now given by Sikorsky, they will do even more in the years ahead. As my hon. Friend the Member for Western-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) said, we all knew about the two-year gap. It still exists, and the Government should address themselves to the question of how best to fill it through orders and overall support. In that way Westland could retain its skills and capacity, which will be needed in full measure one the EH101 goes into production. Moreover, what could be more ludicrous than the possibility of thousands of skilled men going off to the four corners of the world where their skills are in demand and then to have to cobble them together again in 1990-91 for production of the EH101? We should not tolerate such a ludicrous state of affairs.

Some hon. Members have looked at the larger picture and called for orders on a big scale. I do not disagree one iota with that. Used with skill, the helicopter massively increases mobility and provides unrivalled hitting power right across the battlefield. We lag behind in making imaginative use of that flexibility. We do not use helicopters properly, and others have led the way instead. The Germans, Americans and even the Russians have done it, yet we lag behind. That is sad, because this Government took the imaginative step of turning the 5th Infantry Brigade into the 5th Airborne Brigade. That was a sensible move and should have been followed by providing more modern helicopters for that brigade and for the other air mobile brigades.

We need decisions, but what more can we do to help? In March I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence what helicopters were in use with the Queen's Flight and when they went into service. I was told that there were two Wessex helicopters in service with the Queen's Flight and that they had entered service in June and July 1969. Given the age of those helicopters, there must be a strong case for the Government placing an immediate order for two new helicopters for the Queen's Flight. That would have a dramatic effect on the company. First, it would give it an order worth about £5·5 million involving some 100,000 man hours of work. That is not to be sneezed at in the present climate. Secondly, and more important, the Wessex could be replaced by Sea Kings or Black Hawks, provided that the latter were built in this country, and that would be a clear sign to the world that our Government have complete confidence in Westland and are determined to help in any way possible. What better advertisement could there be for such excellent British products?

As a result of such a decision, confidence would increase and orders would flow in from abroad. Earlier, the Secretary of State said that we were in the business of trying to build up confidence and of helping the export market. Nothing could do more to help Westland than if it received an order to build and fit out two Sea Kings or Black Hawks for the Queen's Flight. I beg my right hon. Friend to consider this possibility as a matter of urgency.

8.18 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I hope that the employment prospects for those employed at Westland in Yeovil will be secure. I noted, in particular, the remarks made by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), and I should stress that anything that undermined that security of employment would be of the utmost concern to Labour Members.

I want to concentrate on the fourth report of the Defence Committee on the Government's decision-making. Emerging from it is a picture of deceit and dishonesty at the very highest level of this Administration. Paragraph 36 of the Government's response quotes the Prime Minister as saying:

"Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry approached officials in my office who made it clear that it was not intended to disclose the Solicitor General's letter from 10 Downing Street; but, being told that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had authorised the disclosure, they accepted"—

that is, No. 10—

"that the Department of Trade and Industry should make it and they accepted the means by which it was proposed that the disclosure should be made."

That seems very bland, and if one compares that account with what appeared in *The Observer* last Sunday, one gets another picture altogether. Perhaps the Leader of the House will tell us whether the report by Adam Raphael is accurate. He wrote that Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's press secretary, put considerable pressure—and used certain words that would not be allowed by the Chair—on Miss Colette Bowe to ensure that the leak took place. Clearly there is a discrepancy between the Government's response and the feeling in the media about what occurred on that fateful day.

It is to the credit of Miss Bowe that she had such reluctance to do what she knew must have been wrong. Paragraph 174 of the Defence Committee's report speaks of the reluctance that Miss Bowe undoubtedly felt. She had doubts about the propriety of what was being done. I can respect the doubts and reluctance that she had at the time to leak extracts from the Solicitor-General's letter. It is also understandable that in all the circumstances Miss Bowe later sought immunity from prosecution, and that immunity was granted by the Attorney-General.

Apart from all the other shameful conduct in this whole wretched business, the Government also bear responsibility for placing a public servant such as Miss Colette Bowe in such an invidious position. No apology has been made to her about the position in which she was place by being forced to leak the letter. It is clear that Mr. Bernard Ingham must also bear responsibility for the excessive pressure that he exerted on her.

As the Defence Committee report makes clear, it may well be that other pressure was put upon her by her seniors in the Department of Trade and Industry, but Mr. Ingham's role does not come out very well. He seems to have a great deal of power. One wonders to whom he is really responsible. He is obviously responsible to the Prime Minister, but he has more power and authority than perhaps any other Prime Minister's press secretary has ever had. We should compare the power of Mr. Ingham with that of any hon. Member of this House——

Mr. Sheldon: Or the Cabinet.

Mr. Winnick: Indeed. That is a good comparison. He probably does have more power than a member of the Cabinet. Is that a healthy position in a parliamentary democracy?

The Secretary of State for Defence smiled when I made that point, but he no doubt knows the position far better than I do, and privately would probably confirm what I have just said.

Inevitably, there will be a comparison between what happened in this case and what happened to Miss Sarah Tisdall, who responded to her conscience and leaked a certain document. I was one of the four Labour Members who visited her in prison. I continue to have a great respect for her. One of her tormentors was the then Secretary of State for Defence, who in the Westland affair did not hesitate to leak and so on to his advantage, quite regardless of the view of the rest of the Cabinet.

The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, today made some remarks with which I entirely agree. He emphasised the need for collective Cabinet responsibility. We would all agree with that. I am not here as the apologist for the then Secretary of State for Defence. Undoubtedly the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) acted in a way that could not possibly be justified. If the Cabinet—I have no reason to believe otherwise — made a decision and the right hon. Gentleman refused to accept it and conspired to undermine that decision, that is extremely serious. I would not wish to minimise it for a moment.

If the Prime Minister was of the view that the right hon. Gentleman was not acting in a proper way, it was up to her to act accordingly. She should have warned him, and had he been unwilling to accept the warning, she should have sacked him. But she did not do so. Was the Prime Minister reluctant to sack the right hon. Gentleman because she feared that he would be far more of a nuisance outside the Cabinet than inside, or was he being rewarded for his excellent work in trying to discredit the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? Those are interesting points which only the Prime Minister can answer.

Instead of acting as a Prime Minister should—and as previous Prime Ministers undoubtedly would have acted —by sacking the right hon. Gentleman, the right hon. Lady did something quite different. She got the Solicitor-General to write a letter. Here I come to the crux of the matter. When Conservative Members say that the Prime Minister was innocent of the leaking, certain questions are bound to arise. Would her officials at No. 10 have acted as they did unless they knew that she would not disapprove of what they intended to do? Would they have acted as they did had they believed that they would get into serious disciplinary trouble? The officials at No. 10 acted as they did because they knew that the Prime Minister wanted them to act in that way. It is difficult to believe any other version of the facts.

The Defence Committee's report rightly refers to the disreputable way in which the leak occurred. Perhaps one can express some surprise at the fact that the Solicitor-General did not resign. That is entirely a matter for him; I have not seen him in the Chamber so far.

The Prime Minister has become far too powerful. She has a style which many peopole find offensive. She has a domineering style and is intolerant of any critics, both inside her party and in the Cabinet. She now has a Cabinet composed of members who are too scared to speak out,

and we all know what happened to the Leader of the House when he made certain remarks. Mr. Bernard Ingham let it be known to the press lobby that the right hon. Gentleman was a semi-detached member of the Cabinet. That is the sort of way in which certain members of the Cabinet are discredited.

Compared with the Cabinet in 1979, we now have one that is dominated by the Prime Minister, and very few members are willing to stand up to her. That is unfortunate. The country is sick and tired of a Prime Minister whose style of leadership is so dominating, and it is sick and tired of this Government.

The Westland affair has demonstrated once again how this Government conduct their affairs. It is a wretched, shameful business, and any self-respecting member of the Cabinet would have resigned rather than stay in the Prime Minister's Government.

8.30 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): I shall confine myself to one aspect of the debate—paragraphs 41 to 44 of the Government's response — not least because the Trade and Industry Select Committee of which I am a member has not yet reported on its own examination of certain aspects of the Westland affair.

The first important fact of which I wish to remind the House is that the quotation from the Procedure Committee report, which appears at the bottom of paragraph 42 in the Government's response, is not from a paragraph of that report which the House of Commons has accepted. One would not guess that from reading the reference to it, but it is very important.

The report from that Select Committee was debated by the House on 19 and 20 February 1979 on a motion to adjourn, not on a motion to accept or to approve. The distinction is real, because when it came to setting up the departmental Select Committees, the House gave specific approval to specific recommendations by the Procedure Committee to which this refers. The content of the quotation which the Government are praying in aid has never been accepted or approved by the House. It is important to place that on the record.

This is a matter of importance because it must not be said after tonight's Division that the House has approved the Government's response to certain reports by the Defence Committee. It will have done no such thing. This is a motion to adjourn, and that must never be confused with the House giving its assent to the propositions contained in the document concerned.

Paragraph 41 contains a wholly untrue statement of fact. It states:

> "Select Committees exercise their formal powers to inquire into the policies and actions of Departments by virtue of the accountability of Ministers to Parliament."

It is not by virtue of that at all. It is by virtue of the terms of the motion passed by the House of Commons to set them up.

Moneylenders in general are not accountable to the House of Commons, but when a Select Committee was set up to inquire into the practice of moneylending the terms of the motion setting it up made moneylenders accountable to the House. When a moneylender refused to answer questions by the Select Committee he was brought to the Bar of the House, reprimanded for his misconduct and ordered to answer, not such questions as the House might think fit, but such questions as the Select Committee thought fit to put to him. That is an important precedent that we do well to bear in mind.

There are three reasons why a civil servant may be present before a Select Committee. I make particular reference to the departmental Select Committees, but this applies to others. The reason is that, first, a Minister appearing before that Select Committee may want civil servants to supply him ad hoc with advice or information so that he can answer the Select Committee. That is a reputable reason.

The second reason is that when a Select Committee has notified a Department of the spectrum of questions which it wishes to put to the Department, the Department will decide which witnesses to send, whether Ministers or civil servants. The Department sends a witness with a competent knowledge of the facts. If the Department happens to choose a civil servant, the civil servant is just as answerable as a Minister. That I do aver. It is very important.

The third reason why a civil servant may be present before a Select Committee is that the Select Committee has specifically requested or, in extremis, ordered that he should be there. There can be a good reason for that—that first-hand evidence is always preferable to second-hand evidence. If that which is being inquired into is not advice given by a civil servant to a Minister, it is proper for a civil servant to refuse to say what advice he has given or for the Minister to refuse to reveal what advice he has been given. However, if the inquiry is into the action of a civil servant, first-hand evidence is in many cases preferable, not least if no Minister knows first-hand what action the civil servant took in the particular circumstances being investigated.

The doctrine that only the Minister is answerable is unacceptable because the Minister is only guessing. He is not giving evidence from his own knowledge. That is crucial when the purpose of the Select Committee is to inquire into events and facts. Paragraph 41 of the Government's response is wholly inaccurate and must not be allowed to stand.

I have commented on the defect in the quotation. It is an opinion taken out of context from a Select Committee report which no Government of the day, and no Government since, has put to the House for its approval. That is possibly wise.

The end of paragraph 44 contains a triumphant announcement. It states:

> "Accordingly the Government proposes to make it clear to civil servants giving evidence to Select Committees that they should not answer questions which are or appear to be directed to the conduct of themselves or of other named civil servants."

If the word "conduct" is intended to mean advice that they gave to their Minister, that is proper and does not need to be said because there is nothing new in it. But if "conduct" means the actions of a civil servant in a series of events into which an inquiry is being held and which action is at the nub of the inquiry, that cannot be accepted.

If "conduct" means "actions", of course the Select Committee must be able to inquire at first hand into those events from the only person who knows first hand exactly what happened. If that civil servant is not the only person who knows, it is still advisable for that civil servant to have the opportunity to state to the Committee whether the

[Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop]

version of events given by another witness is correct. Otherwise the civil servant cannot protect himself against a garnished version, given, for instance, by a Minister.

Just as it can be unjust for a civil servant to be pressed on matters which he cannot properly reveal to the Committee, so there is nothing improper in a civil servant revealing to a Committee his own actions. If those actions were improper, it is for the civil servant's Minister, not the Committee, to punish him formally. It is most certainly correct for the Committee to enforce its authority against civil servants if only they have first-hand knowledge of the events into which the inquiry is being held. Never is that more true than when a Minister specifically, on the Floor of the House, invites a Select Committee to look into a given series of events.

That is the contribution that I want to make tonight.

8.38 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I wish to focus on one issue. There has been speculation—with justification—whether the Prime Minister knew about the leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter. I shall concentrate on one of the known facts. What was known and accepted by the Select Committee and by the Armstrong inquiry was that Department of Trade and Industry officials did leak the Solicitor-General's letter — and leaked it with the knowledge of officials at 10 Downing street. Indeed, the Armstrong inquiry — this was repeated by the Select Committee on Defence—found that the officials from 10 Downing street accepted that the Department of Trade and Industry would leak the Solicitor-General's letter.

I want the Leader of the House to answer two specific points surrounding that. Surely it was the duty of the officials, especially in circumstances where they knew that the Department of Trade and Industry was going to leak the letter, not to be indifferent to that and, still less, in the words of Armstrong, to "accept" that it was being leaked. Surely their clear duty was strenuously to object to it being leaked. That is not merely an abstract or theoretical duty.

If, during the telephone conversation and the meetings between the Department of Trade and Industry and officials from No. 10, those officials had said that the letter must not be leaked and that it would be grossly improper to leak the letter in that way, the practical consequence would be that the letter would never have been leaked. Therefore, they had a serious duty to object to the leak. I would like the Leader of the House to say whether he agrees that they had such a duty. If they were under such a duty, why does the doctrine of ministerial responsibility not mean that the Prime Minister must be responsible for the breach of duty of her officials? Why has that doctrine been junked so unceremoniously by a Prime Minister who is so acutely involved in it? I would like the Leader of the House to say whether he believes that the doctrine applied in those circumstances and that the duty of the officials existed.

There is an area of fact in this case which comes so close to the line between speculation and certainty that we should not leave a discussion of the Select Committee report without mentioning it. The inquiry that was set up under Sir Robert Armstrong was crucial to the Prime Minister. It was crucial that when the inquiry was established she had no knowledge of involvement in the leak of the Department of Trade and Industry or No. 10 officials. It was crucial because the way in which the inquiry was being presented to us—I remember it being announced in the House—was that she, like us, was an innocent searcher after the truth surrounding the leaked letter. The Prime Minister's statement that she had no knowledge of the connivance of the Department of Trade and Industry or No. 10 officials prior to the inquiry being established is vital.

Our credulity is stretched to breaking point when we consider the events of 7 January. On that day, as the Select Committee said, and the Prime Minister has conceded, there was a meeting at Downing street about the Westland affair between the Prime Minister and members of her office. That was the morning after the leak of the letter. We can cast our minds back to the headlines in the newspapers on that day. They were all about the leaking of the letter. We well remember the headline in *The Sun* about the then Secretary of State for Defence. Is it seriously being suggested that during that meeting on 7 January none of those officials, even though they knew what had happened to the leaked letter, sought to mention the source of the leak? The Select Committee thought that that was difficult to understand. However, it is even more difficult to understand why the Prime Minister did not even ask whether they knew. We are expected to believe that perhaps she was too timid or lacking in curiosity to ask.

This afternoon we heard from the Secretary of State for Defence a speech that he was perfectly entitled to make. It was about the importance of the helicopter industry, the technical details of the industry and important defence implications. However, he was not entitled to ignore completely the other issue in this matter—the integrity of the Government and of the Prime Minister. Until we get an answer to some of the serious and unanswered questions that have been raised this evening, the integrity of the Government will remain in doubt.

8.45 pm

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): As a member of the Select Committee on Defence, I welcome the Government's response to our third report. I wish that I could say the same about the Government's response to our fourth report.

During the short time available I want to concentrate on paragraph 44 of that report. The matter is urgent, because I do not believe that any hon. Member tonight has mentioned a fact which greatly concerns me, and I have heard all the speeches but two. I am advised that permanent secretaries have already advised all civil servants who are likely to appear before Select Committees about paragraph 44. That being the case, it must be assumed that civil servants who are about to come before a Select Committee or are in the process of coming before a Committee will take that paragraph as their guideline.

Underlying the Government's response is an extension of the "going over the top" syndrome that we have seen running through the Westland affair. I do not understand why the Government felt that they had to respond in the terms that they did in paragraph 44. Indeed, the idea that one can define how civil servants should respond to Select Committees seems to be fraught with danger. There are some conventions and, as one of my hon. Friends said, there are some precedents built up over the years, which

tend to allow the House and the public to get a reasonable view of what is going on. However, to define and confine what civil servants may say to hon. Members is dangerous.

Underlying paragraph 44 appears to be the suggestion that there is some form of total ministerial responsibility for all activities of Departments. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) rightly touched on the way in which that does not stand up with the complexity of government, the degree of decentralisation and, in the Ministry of Defence, on matters of defence procurement, where there are whole areas in which civil servants have to act under their own responsibility and must, necessarily, be responsive to questioning from hon. Members and Select Committees.

In paragraph 44 the Government seem to be implying that Ministers can speak on all issues. That is not only a fallacy, but does not address itself to the genuine problem of continuity. I would argue that greater exposure of civil servants to examination by hon. Members increases public confidence in the administration of this country. The vast majority of civil servants who appear before us are people of ability and obvious integrity. That comes through in many of our proceedings. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) said, we are naturally vigilant to see whether there is evidence of error or anything that might in any way be regarded as fradulent. We are also conscious of creating a climate of confidence where we see work carried out faithfully and with ability.

One problem that comes out in the third and fourth report is the Government's assumption that in the present situation, where Ministers move around, there is some way by which we can overcome the difficulty of continuity. I want to highlight the relationship between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence. I served in the old Department of Trade and Industry for two and a half years and was fully conscious of the extreme concern over the problem of liaison between 1979 and 1981. It has to be said that the Westland saga has been a classic illustration of a major rift between those two Departments.

When we look to the assurances for the future and recall some of the evidence given to us in Committee, I must remind the House of the evidence given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont)—I have given him notice of my intention to name him — who was then the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. At that time he properly argued that the fact that he had been in both the Department of Industry and Ministry of Defence meant that he understood both aspects of the debate and that liaison was never at a better level. That was reassuring as far as it went, but now he is a Minister in the Treasury, so his argument was shown in all its weakness.

In reality, continuity in Government Departments is provided by civil servants. Over recent years, Select Committees have increased in strength. Partly to overcome that lack of continuity with Ministers, many Select Committees have begun to establish a knowledge and understanding of particular civil servants and the way the system works. Greater continuity and stability within the Civil Service would also help in some areas. The ministerial problem is a genuine one.

A further aspect of this recent development should concern the House. I remind the House that this Government, through a motion which the House carried, gave the Defence Select Committee the substantial responsibility, on behalf of the whole House, of carrying out this inquiry. The Select Committee was perfectly willing and, I hope, has shown itself able to discharge that duty. None of us could have envisaged a recommendation at the end of the report which clearly said that civil servants, in this case Sir Robert Armstrong, could not be asked on another occasion to do what was done on this occasion.

The Government put forward an argument of expediency in referring the matter to a Select Committee, but now they seek to renege on the implicit deal, which I and, I suspect, others took to be part of the understanding, that this sort of activity was likely to be a natural extension of the work of Select Committees if we were faced with these problems. The Government may say that they hope they will not have this particular drama again and that lessons have been learnt within the Government. That may be so, but the House is entitled to assume that in giving responsibility to Select Committees the Government are prepared to live with the implications of that and not seek to move the goal posts later.

As a member of the old Select Committee on the Nationalised Industries, I recall vividly the great argument about access to persons and papers with regard to Sir Charles Villiers and the British Steel Corporation's corporate plans and long-term planning. As a member of the Opposition, I felt able to go along with the majority view, recognising that Labour Members were prepared to join forces to do what we thought was right for Parliament. That was an important step in the development of increased powers for Select Committees and I believe that these inquiries will be seen as a further stepping stone along that way. I hope that tonight the Government will say that they are not irrevocably seeking to turn back the clock, because that would be to their loss and a loss to the House and the country.

8.53 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): To the general public our proceedings will have seemed arcane, esoteric, far removed from the problems of the Westland helicopter company and far too little preoccupied with the problems associated with our country's defence and the important role which the helicopter plays in both the land-air battle and maritime warfare. Perhaps it was the fault of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), who was at his most engaging, in starting us off on a great whodunnit which will probably continue until 10 o'clock.

The third report of the Defence Select Committee makes some important observations on helicopter strategy. The absence of a helicopter strategy has undoubtedly led considerably to the commercial problems of the Westland company and the subsequent political furore of which we are all too well aware.

I am lucky in that I serve as a Committee chairman and rapporteur in the Western European Union. As such, for the last few weeks I have been visiting European capitals and talking to defence staffs and companies, including Agusta, Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm, Aerospatiale and Westland. Whereas my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was expatiating at length on the importance of a European helicopter strategy when events were unfolding in December 1985 and January 1986, we

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

have heard remarkably little about it tonight. Nevertheless, it remains as important for the future of the industry now as it was then.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) was absolutely right in saying that the board of Westland was justified in its commercial decisions and that the Government's policy was sound. I said so at the time, and such evidence as I gave the Select Committee was to similar effect. However, I refer the House to the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who said, with regard to the light support helicopter for our armed forces, that there was no absolute cut-off date for the replacement of the Wessex and Puma aircraft currently in service with the RAF. I am sure that this was a sound technical observation, but for the people at Westland, whose jobs are at risk, in that the work on EH 101 will not start for some time yet, it is a statement of considerable significance.

My right hon. Friend went on to say that he wished the company well with its full range of products—Sea King, Lynx, the EH101 and, interestingly, the Black Hawk. Black Hawk has not yet been built by Westland. It is undergoing flight trials with the RTM322 engine, which we all believe is critical to the helicopter's future. It is noteworthy that nobody mentioned the important RTM322 Franco-British engine programme, which will be important for Leavesden, Pau and other places associated with it, and, perhaps, for the future of the EH101, if the RTM322 is specified, rather than the GE700 engine which will power the prototypes. There could be merit in a mix of aeroplanes for the light support helicopter requirement. In battlefield conditions a number of helicopters of different sizes could be needed to meet the tactical situation.

It will be difficult for Westland to launch the Black Hawk with the RTM322 on the basis of a small order of aircraft for the RAF; for example, for a Wessex replacement alone. But if the Wessex and Puma were both replaced by the Black Hawk, then when the EH101 in its transport variant becomes available in the early 1990s, which is earlier than the naval variant, it could be considered whether that aeroplane was necessary also. It has a 28 troop lift capability, which is in line with Army thinking, or so one is led to believe. If there is a need to top up the RAF's medium-lift capability, extra Chinooks could be ordered as and when required.

A flexible and adaptable policy is available to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State if he has the courage to take it, and if the Treasury allows him to do so. The feasibility study for the NH90 will land on my right hon. Friend's desk in two or three weeks' time. It is a five-nation programme with two roles. The first is the naval role, in which we are not participating, for the new NATO frigate for the 1990s. The second is a light support helicopter role. It would not be the end of the world if we withdrew, but, if we do not withdraw, we should try to shift the programme to the right—we should try to have it come into service later rather than sooner, so that we can fill the gap in capacity at Westland with the Black Hawk now. The trouble is that the Black Hawk and the Super Puma are similar in dimensions and capability to the type of aeroplane which the NH90 might become.

I hope that my right hon. Friend has the courage of his convictions and persuades the Treasury to spend the money that Westland has long needed. It is under good management and deserves the Government's support.

9 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): This has been a serious and wide-ranging debate, as the subject matter undoubtedly deserves.

It is not altogether surprising that those who have concentrated on the Select Committee's third report have tended to come from the Conservative Benches. That is not because there is disagreement between the two sides of the House about the importance of the future of the helicopter industry and of the livelihood of those who work in it. Rather it is that, in spite of its complexities and importance, it is, in the context of today's debate, a far less controversial matter between the two sides of the House than the rocks and shoals in the fourth report.

It was therefore no surprise to me that the Secretary of State for Defence spent 25 minutes on the third report and, on the fourth, contented himself by repeating the bromide of paragraph 28 of the Government's response. That said:

> "Full accounts of the matters with which the Fourth Report is concerned have already been given by Ministers in statements in Parliament, speeches in debates and Answers to Parliamentary Questions, and by the Head of the Home Civil Service in his evidence to the Committee. The Government stands by those accounts, sees no reason to qualify or add to them, and no point in repeating yet again the sequence of events and decisions covered by the report."

Life would be very simple if the House were prepared to accept such bland statements which, if the Government had their way, would close down the debate on the important issues that are raised in the report.

It is no surprise that the Opposition should for the most part have concentrated on the fourth report and the important constitutional issues raised in it. I have heard all but one of the speeches that have been made, and that one was reported to me. Two features have been quite outstanding. The first is that nobody has challenged the contents of the fourth report. Nobody has challenged one sentence of it, yet it is one of the most dramatic and controversial reports ever to have come out of a Select Committee. That is quite remarkable.

The second feature, which has united the House, is the sense of shock at — I can put it no lower — and of rejection of, paragraphs 41 to 44 of the Government's response to the Select Committee's third and fourth reports, especially the fourth. The rejection is extremely important.

I was grateful to the right hon. Members for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) and for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), with their special Select Committee experience, for saying so strongly how unacceptable the new restrictions on Select Committees would be.

I can assure them that, as far as we in the Opposition are concerned, if the motion is carried, in no sense will it be interpreted by us to mean any approval for paragraphs 41 to 44 of the Government's response.

What needs stressing at the start is that the Select Committee's controversial fourth report is unanimous. Since the majority of the Committee's members, as is customary, are drawn from the majority party, there can be no question of any party bias in what it had to say.

Moreover, as the Committee records in the opening paragraph of its report, its inquiry was specifically endorsed when, at the end of the debate on 15 January 1986, the House accepted a Government amendment to the Opposition motion containing these words:

"That this House . . . further recognises the competence of departmental Select Committees of the House of Commons to consider the issues raised by these developments." — [*Official Report*, 15 January 1986; Vol. 89, c. 1174.]

The Select Committee properly sought to examine the history of the crisis that befell Westland from 1984 onwards, and central to this debate, the process of Government decision making and the parts played in it by the then Secretary of State for Defence, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Law Officers, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Secretary and the senior officials at No. 10 and the Department of Trade and Industry who were directly involved.

The report of the Select Committee on Defence raises questions of the utmost importance — the standard of conduct of Government and Ministers, the use and misuse of civil servants and the accountability of Ministers and officials to the House of Commons. At the centre of this complex story and at the peak moment in the struggle between the then Secretary of State for Defence and the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, was, as others have already stressed, the deliberate leak of the Solicitor-General's letter, designed to discredit the Secretary of State for Defence, and the subsequent inquiry into that leak by Sir Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary.

Let there be no mistake or misunderstanding that the leak was a flagrant breach of the Official Secrets Act and of the rules and practices that have long established a special confidentiality for Law Officers' advice, rules reaffirmed as recently as 11 August 1983 and circulated to all Departments. The leak raised at once the central question of who was responsible and, on the insistence of the Law Officers, led to the setting up of an official inquiry undertaken by the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong. As the House knows, the leak occurred on 6 January and Sir Robert completed his report on 22 January.

In exploring those important matters, the Select Committee on Defence laboured under several handicaps, to which it drew attention. As the Committee put it,

"We sought oral evidence from three officials of the Department of Trade and Industry: Mr. John Michell, Under Secretary, Air Division; Mr. John Mogg, Private Secretary to the Secretary of State; and Miss Colette Bowe, Director of Information."

The Committee's request was turned down. It also sought oral evidence from Mr. Bernard Ingham, Chief Press Secretary to the Prime Minister and from Mr. Charles Powell, a private secretary to the Prime Minister. That request was also refused the Select Committee. Furthermore, Sir Robert Armstrong, who appeared before the Committee, was not prepared to name any official involved or to give details of what officials had told him during the inquiry. The former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry refused again and again to answer important questions put to him by the Select Committee.

Nevertheless, in spite of those grave handicaps, the Select Committee's report is a remarkably thorough record, analysis and critique of what took place. In particular, its report brings out again and again the central and decisive role played by the Prime Minister herself and No. 10 in the whole affair. It is upon her role and that of the officials that I intend to concentrate.

As other hon. Members have pointed out, the Prime Minister instigated the Solicitor-General's lettter in the first place. On 27 January, she told the House:

"I asked that a message be sent to my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, as the sponsoring Minister for Westland, to suggest that he should ask the Solicitor-General to consider the Defence Secretary's letter and give his opinion on whether it was accurate, and consistent with my own letter to Sir John Cuckney." — [*Official Report*, 27 January 1986; Vol. 10, c. 652.]

Many people think that that in itself was an extraordinary proceeding. The obvious course was for the right hon. Lady to call in the Secretary of State for Defence and, if the letter had contained material inaccuracies, to instruct him either to make a further and corrective statement or to resign.

However, the right hon. Lady preferred a different and more devious route. Having got the Solicitor-General to write a letter, it was the Prime Minister's self-confessed wish that its contents should be made known, and without delay. On 23 January, she told the House:

"it was especially important in this situation for statements made on behalf of the Government on which commercial judgments might be based, to be accurate and in no way misleading.

That being so, it was a matter of duty that it should be made known publicly that there were thought to be material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected" — [*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 449.]

in the letter of the then Secretary of State for Defence.

When speaking in the House four days later on 27 January and dealing with the approaches made by the DTI to her office about authority for the leak, the right hon. Lady said that her office was accordingly approached. It did not seek her agreement. It considered that she should agree with the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that the fact that the then Defence Secretary's letter of 3 January was thought by the Solicitor-General to contain material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected should become public knowledge as soon as possible and before Sir John Cuckney's press conference.

Also on 27 January, the right hon. Lady said that the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was, in her judgment, right in thinking that it was important that the possible existence of material inaccuracies in the letter of 3 January by the then Secretary of State for Defence should become a matter of public knowledge.

On the same day, she said:

"I told the House on 23 January—it was accepted—that the Department of Trade and Industry should disclose the fact that the then Defence Secretary's letter of 3 January was thought by the Solicitor-General to contain material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected, and that, in view of the urgency of the matter, the disclosure should be made in that way it was." — [*Official Report*, 27 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 656.]

Nothing could be clearer. The Prime Minister agreed with the leak. She agreed not only with the leak but with the timing of it. It all had to be before Sir John Cuckney's press conference. She accepted that the disclosure

"should be made in the way it was".

I find that shocking. I find her conduct demeans both the Prime Minister herself and the great office she holds. A highly selective leak was duly made by the DTI, but the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made it absolutely plain to the Select Committee, and repeated

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today, that the leak would only be authorised by him subject to the agreement of No. 10. Paragraph 152 of the Select Committee's report states:

"Mr. Brittan was emphatic about the need for the Prime Minister's office to approve the disclosure: 'I would particularly stress, it all had to be subject to the agreement of No. 10.'"

Nothing could be clearer. Mr. Mogg of the DTI talked to Mr. Powell at No. 10, Miss Colette Bowe of the DTI press office and Mr. Bernard Ingham, chief press secretary at No. 10. Far from there being any veto from No. 10, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said, on this utterly improper and outrageous course of action, it was during the conversation between the two press officers that the method of disclosure was agreed.

Sir Robert Armstrong told the Select Committee:

"The Prime Minister's office was consulted about the method of disclosure; they did not give instructions, but they agreed that the only practicable way of getting the fact that the Solicitor-General had written and the gist of what he had said in this letter into the public domain within the time constraint of the 4.00 pm deadline was the method that was eventually adopted. The evidence given to my inquiry does not suggest that any other method of disclosure was seriously considered, given the time constraint".

As for No. 10's press office not giving instructions, it is clear that Miss Bowe of the Department of Trade and Industry was extremely worried and tried unsuccessfully to contact her permanent secretary to seek his advice and protection. It is clear that she was ordered to leak.

In last Sunday's edition of *The Observer*, as has been pointed out, Mr. Bernard Ingham was directly quoted as saying, "You will . . . do as you are . . . well told." That is a direct challenge from a leading newspaper. If it is untrue, honour and reputation oblige Mr. Ingham to issue a writ. If it is true, he has committed an unacceptable deceit and should resign. It is plain that without No. 10's clearance or cover and without the urging of Mr. Bernard Ingham, the leak would never have taken place. As the Select Committee commented, the authority of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry alone would not have been enough. The Committee stated:

"We do not believe that such authority is sufficient, or would be regarded by senior officials in key positions as sufficient, to make public parts of a document

- which was classified;
- which did not originate in the Secretary of State's own department;
- which contained the advice of a Law Officer;
- which was to be disclosed without the knowledge or permission of the Law Officer."

The Prime Minister's disclaimer that, when her office was approached by the Department of Trade and Industry, her officials "did not seek my agreement" is irrelevant. They knew that it was not necessary. They knew that it was what she herself wished to be done. Indeed, if a Prime Minister thought, as the right hon. Lady put it in her own words, that it was "a matter of duty" that the information be put in the public domain, it would be impossible to reach any other conclusion. Her other disclaimer, that she regretted the exact way in which the disclosure was made, contradicts her own statement that in view of the urgency of the matter, the disclosure should be made in the way it was.

Given the Prime Minister's own statement that it was "a matter of duty" that the Solicitor-General's letter be made known publicly, and having used the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to instigate the Solicitor-General's letter, her statement that she did not know about Mr. Brittan's own role in the matter of disclosure until the inquiry had reported on 22 January is incredible. Nevertheless, she proceeded to set up a leak inquiry. The Prime Minister may not have known the full details surrounding the leak, not least because she carefully refrained from asking Mr. Bernard Ingham and Mr. Powell about the leak when she saw them the following day. They carefully avoided giving her the information, too.

Significantly, the Select Committee asked the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he had any conversations with the Prime Minister about the fact that he had authorised disclosure of part of the Solicitor-General's letter before the Prime Minister received the report of the inquiry. He refused to tell us. When it was put to him that there was a period after the inquiry had been set up, during which he knew what his role had been but chose not to inform the Prime Minister, he would not comment.

The leak could only have been instigated by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, by the Prime Minister's own officials at No. 10 or by agreement between them. The Prime Minister must have known this and deliberately declined to ask either of them who had done what. Again, this is conduct unworthy of a Prime Minister.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to paragraph 183 of our report, which says:

"The evidence is that the action of the Prime Minister's office on 6 January . . . was without her direct authority. She has stated she had no knowledge on 6 January of what was taking place. We accept this."

Is the right hon. Gentleman telling the House that he does not agree with the 10 Members of the Select Committee, including the three Labour Members?

Mr. Shore: The right hon. Gentleman has not been listening closely enough to my argument. I accept that statement for what it is worth. She was not told about these matters or consulted by her officials on 6 January. That is what she said and I believe her, but if the right hon. Gentleman has a better look at what I have said, he will see why that statement by the Prime Minister has to be seen in the context of what happened before and after.

The Government's response to the Defence Committee's report glides carefully over the central issue of prime ministerial involvement. The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry conveniently carried the can. He resigned, but interestingly, as one of my hon. Friends pointed out, not because he had improperly leaked the Solicitor-General's letter but because he felt that he had lost the confidence of his colleagues. The Prime Minister, in her remarkable letter to him, made no reference to the leak of the letter but made it clear that it was her wish

"that you should remain a Member of the Cabinet . . . hope that it will not be long before you return to high office to continue your Ministerial career."

Not only was no Minister rebuked or punished for this breach of the Official Secrets Act and flagrant violation of the rules of confidentiality surrounding Law Officers' advice, but none of the high civil servants involved were rebuked either. Mr. Mogg has recently been promoted to under-secretary and the Prime Minister went out of her way to tell the House:

"My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have total confidence in our officials referred to in the report."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 588.]

In the Government's response to the Select Committee, paragraph 38 reads:

"the Government is satisfied that those concerned acted in good faith, and remains of the view that, having regard to all the circumstances, disciplinary proceedings were not called for."

The Prime Minister has expressed her regret that the Solicitor-General's letter was disclosed in the way that it was disclosed, but it is clear that she considers the breach of the Official Secrets Act and the flouting of a major convention to be no more than the merest peccadillo.

The Westland affair raises major questions as to the proper conduct of Ministers and above all of the Prime Minister. It also raises, acutely, the accountability of Ministers to Parliament. Referring to the refusal of Ministers to allow the five civil servants directly involved to give evidence before it, the Select Committee says:

"At the heart of this problem lies the question of accountability to Parliament . . . The fact that Ministers have not made themselves fully accountable to parliament in this matter has called into question the conduct of the Civil Servants involved."

Both the Defence Committee and the Treasury and Civil Service Committee have stated their rejection of the Government's excuse for not allowing civil servants to be questioned, which is that, having been subjected to a full official inquiry, they would be placed in double jeopardy.

In their response to the Select Committee, the Government not only rejected the Select Committee's argument and restated without a single qualification the old basic principles that Ministers are responsible to Parliament and civil servants are responsible to Ministers; they also lay down new and tighter restrictions on what civil servants can do when they appear before Select Committees. As they say in paragraph 41:

"Civil servants who appear before them do so as representatives of, and subject to the instructions of, the Minister."

In paragraph 44, they say:

"Accordingly the Government proposes to make it clear to civil servants giving evidence to Select Committees that they should not answer questions which are or appear to be directed to the conduct of themselves or of other named individual civil servants."

That restriction would neuter the work of the Select Committee on Defence, would have made the existing report of that Committee impossible and would have neutered the work of all Select Committees. That has been the testimony of all the Chairmen of Select Committees who have spoken in this debate.

The Government's response to the Committee is extraordinary. It is perhaps even more extraordinary when we recall, as I did at the beginning of my speech, that Select Committees were expressly recognised through their competence to consider the issues raised by the Westland developments. I refresh my memory of the debate which took place on 25 June 1979 when the new system of Select Committees was proposed by the then Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas), and endorsed by the House. The right hon. Gentleman prefaced his speech with the statement:

"It has been increasingly felt that the twentieth century Parliament is not effectively supervising the Executive, and that while the power and effectiveness of Whitehall has grown, that of Westminster has diminished.

The proposals that the Government are placing before the House are intended to redress the balance of power to enable the House of Commons to do more effectively the job it has been elected to do."

Later in his speech the right hon. Gentleman said:

"The Government will make available to Select Committees as much information as possible, including confidential information for which, of course, protection may have to be sought by means of the sidelining procedure . . . There need be no fear that departmental Ministers will refuse to attend Committees to answer questions about their Departments or that they will not make every effort to ensure that the fullest possible information is made available to them.

I give the House the pledge on the part of the Government that every Minister from the most senior Cabinet Minister to the most junior Under-Secretary will do all in his or her power to co-operate with the new system of Committees and to make it a success."—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1979; Vol 969, c. 36-45.]

We have moved a long way from June 1979 when those statements were made. The new restrictions which the Government are now placing upon civil servants giving evidence to Select Committees will greatly reduce their effectiveness and must be rejected by the House.

The Westland story has revealed, as the Select Committee on Defence reports and the Government's response have revealed, that whatever degree of accountability there may be for Ministers to the House and its Select Committees, there is no such accountability for the Prime Minister and her servants in No. 10. Prime Ministers have appeared before Select Committees.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet) *rose*——

Mr. Shore: Most recently, Mr. Neville Chamberlain appeared before a Select Committee in 1937 on the interesting question of the Official Secrets Act 1911 and the alleged breach of that Act.

However, this Prime Minister does not appear before Select Committees and she refuses to allow her officials at No. 10 to appear. No. 10 is surrounded by an iron curtain of secrecy and within it deception, half-truth, manipulation and evasion are free to flourish. It cannot be penetrated even when flagrant abuses of legality and procedure have been committed. That is bad for Government, for the House of Commons and for democracy. If we are to achieve proper accountability and redress the balance of power between Whitehall and Westminster, it is our duty to tear those barriers down. I applaud the persistence of the Select Committee and I urge the Committees in renewed hearing to complete the task which they have so successfully begun.

9.28 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): It is now just five hours since the debate began. The matter has been closely argued and seriously debated. Little has been given or sought. However, the one point which binds all of the speakers, has been the thanks that they have expressed to the departmental Select committee on Defence for the third and fourth reports which have provided the heart of this afternoon's debate.

One thing which has also emerged from the debate and the considerationof the many aspects is how many facets are contained in this single topic. In those circumstances, the appropriateness of debating the motion for the Adjournment has been illustrated. Nobody doubts that a motion for the Adjournment can be devastating in its

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consequences. Neville Chamberlain managed to win a motion for the Adjournment and resigned shortly afterwards—*[Interruption.]* I was happy, Mr. Speaker, to cast the fly, not realising just how many lazy trout there would be on the Opposition Benches.

The fact is that the only discussion about the motion for the Adjournment that there has been this afternoon has related not to the melodrama to which I have just referred but, very properly, to the question of the Government's relationship with Select Committees. The great virtue about this motion for the Adjournment is that the debate, discussion and dialogue can proceed unimpeded by anything that happens at 10 o'clock this evening.

Understandably, a great deal of emphasis has been placed upon the fortunes of the Westland helicopter industry. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) told us about his anxieties. They were reinforced by my hon. Friend the member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). To secure an appropriate ordering base for the company is obviously a matter of concern. However, the Government are entitled to observe that during the last few months there has been a most happy record of developing international collaborative deals. That must lie at the heart of the future fortunes of this company—a point that was scored by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). Whatever its discord in other directions, one thing that unites the House is that the future of this company should be secured and that the very considerable recent improvement in its fortunes should be further sustained.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) made a speech that will long be remembered about the issue of collective responsibility. One of the consequences of this debate, and of the whole issue, will be that the importance of collective responsibility as a canon of government has been underlined. All too often institutions and conventions become accepted and almost dull in their familiarity. Only when one experiences their absence does one realise how vital they are to the proper working of government. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend upon the forceful eloquence with which he put his case.

The Select Committee point has been urged upon me by speaker after speaker, beginning with the right hon. Member for Llanelli. The Westland incident has illustrated the importance of Select Committees and the nature of their relationship with the Executive. There have been several references to these matters in the debate and, as Leader of the House, it is appropriate that I should address myself to them. The leader of the Liberal party was one of several speakers who expressed great anxiety that there may be in prospect an evolution of the powers and practices of Select Committees that would be detrimental to their relationship with Parliament generally. I hope that by the end of the debate he can be persuaded at least to have an open mind on that topic.

Before discussing these issues specifically it would benefit the House if I were to say a few words about the development of departmental Select Committees so that they can be seen in context. I welcomed the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). He treated the House to an exposition of the origin of the Select Committee system and expressed a view which constantly needs to be expressed about the importance of maintaining a balance between Select Committees and the Floor of the House.

The House will recall that the present structure of Select Committees dates only from 1979. The present system was set up then by the House on the initiative of this Government following the comprehensive recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure in its first report of the Session 1977-78. While there had been Select Committees of the House since long before then, the present deparmental Select Committee structure was a new creation and has proved its effectiveness. Indeed, departmental Select Committees have become a familar and established part of our parliamentary procedure.

This Government took the initiative in setting up the departmental Select Committee. We have no intention of seeking to hinder or impede their effective scrutiny of the Executive. This follows an undertaking given by the then Leader of the House my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas). The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) spoke about that. My right hon. Friend said that the Government would do all they could

"to co-operate with the new system of Commitees and to make it a success."

He went on to say:

"I believe that declaration of intent to be a better guarantee than formal provisions laid down in Standing Orders".—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1979; Vol. 969, c. 45-6.]

The new system of Committees inherited the long-standing powers of earlier Select Committees. These are set out formally in Standing Orders and are far reaching and without condition. The powers of departmental Select Committees specifically are set out in Standing Order No. 99. Among other powers, this clearly says that departmental Select Committees can send for persons, papers and records. These powers are unqualified.

However, in practice these formal powers have consistently been exercised with discretion and by convention. As is the case with other aspects of business and procedure in this House, convention has been accepted as appropriate for many years — certainly before the departmental Select Committees were created. While Standing Orders must necessarily deal in absolutes, conventions enable the many considerations and factors affecting the work of Select Committees to be taken into account.

The purpose of these conventions is to allow the development of a way of working which is satisfactory to the Committee and to the Executive. In addition, the operation of the conventions has sought to preserve two generally agreed principles of government. The first of these is that each Minister is responsible to Parliament for the conduct of his Department and for the actions carried out by his Department in pursuit of Government policies or in the discharge of responsibilities laid upon him as a Minister. He has the duty to explain in Parliament the extent of his powers and duties and to give an account to Parliament of what is done by him in his capacity as a Minister or by his Department. The second principle is that civil servants, in turn, are responsible to their Ministers for their actions and conduct.

The House would not wish this clear line of ministerial accountability for Departments to be weakened in any way by seeking a new and separate accountability from

officials. The House will wish to note that this was the view of the Select Committee on Procedure in its 1978 report. It said:

"it would not, however, be appropriate for the House to seek directly or through its Committee to enforce its right to secure information from the Executive at a level below that of the Ministerial head of the department concerned . . . since such a practice would tend to undermine rather than strengthen the accountability of Ministers to the House."

I appreciate the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) about the status of that report.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I am following my right hon. Friend carefully, but am I right in saying that the decision of the House was that investigations should be conducted by a Select Committee in relation to a specific Department and that one of the difficulties has been that Parliament never gave authority for, say, a Select Committee to investigate matters relating to the Department of another Minister? Has that not been one of the difficulties in this matter?

Mr. Biffen: I can think of rather more formidable difficulties in this case, but my hon. Friend has made a valid point. That is a matter of some concern for those working with the Select Committees and I know that it constantly requires the attention of the Liaison Select Committee. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Would it not solve all the difficulties if we were to establish a Select Committee to investigate the workings of No. 10?

Mr. Biffen: One would need heroic imagination to suppose that the work of No. 10 has not been undergoing tremendous scrutiny over recent months. The truth is that there are some Labour Members for whom this exercise knows no end. They are on an eternal pilgrimage of trying to discredit my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and to undermine the Government. The idea that they are out to secure some nice constitutional balance is wholly mistaken. I ask my hon. Friends not to be too generous in the judgment of some.

Mr. Batiste: Cannot the bogus nature of the Opposition's indignation on this matter best be measured by how few Back Benchers there are on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point, but I was hoping to proceed in a calm atmosphere rather than one which was needlessly excited. However, my hon. Friend makes a point which can well be seen when one compares the Benches on either side.

There have been times when the Government and the Select Committees have had different perceptions of how the traditional conventions should be applied in a particular case. Those difficulties are inevitable given the different standpoint of the Select Committees and the Executive. Although there is a mechanism of last resort for resolving those disagreements by putting the matter before the House, the practice has always been to seek the kind of resolution which is generally acceptable by using the flexibility which the conventions afford.

The Government sought to find such a resolution in relation to the Defence Select Committee's inquiry into Westland. In the debate on 15 January, the House had endorsed the Government's recognition of the competience of departmental Select Committees to consider the issues raised by Westland. That did not, of course, mean that the usual conventions should be set aside.

Among those conventions is the long-standing practice of the Prime Minister not appearing before Select Committees to give evidence. That point was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), who made a formidable speech detailing criticisms of the Government's reactions. In particular, I have noted his comment that it would not be appropriate for the Prime Minister to appear before a Select Committee.

There has been a tradition that the Prime Minister should be answerable only on the Floor of the House. In this instance, my right hon. Friend has already made a statement to the House on 23 January this year and taken part in two debates on the incident on 15 and 27 January. She has also answered orally and in writing a number of questions on the matter. That, Mr. Speaker, is entirely in accordance with the practice of the House and of successive Administrations. A Prime Minister, by convention, is accountable to the House rather than to individual Select Committees.

That aside, there were two areas in which difficulties were experienced in finding an appropriate way forward. The first occasion is discussed by the Committee in paragraphs 218 to 224 of its report. This concerned the production of two documents which the Committee believed were material to its inquiry. This incident was referred to by the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert). The Government were reluctant to release the documents themselves, since they included material of a classified and commercially confidential nature. But summaries of the documents were provided at an early stage, and certain parts of the original documents were submitted to the Committee in full. Paragraph 224 of the Defence Select Committee's report states the view that the efforts of the permanent secretary at the Department of Trade and Industry to furnish it with summaries as full and accurate as possible

"were both conscientious and successful".

A second area, one of greater difficulty, has been the provision of oral evidence from certain named officials: three from the Department of Trade and Industry, and two from the Prime Minister's Office. The convention in this area is that it is for Ministers to determine who should represent them before Select Committees. The power to call for the attendance of individually named persons is, of course, formally unqualified as the Select Committee was right to assert in paragraph 228 of its report.

Yet it has always been acknowledged that, with regard to civil servants, that power must be limited in practice so that the principles of ministerial accountability are not undermined. In this instance, the officials concerned had already been questioned by the head of the home Civil Service in the course of his inquiry, to which the Prime Minister had agreed. They had given him full accounts of their parts in the matter. The Government took the view that it would be unreasonable for them to be subjected to a further round of detailed questioning by the Defence Select Committee. But the Government were anxious to be helpful, and the Secretary of the Cabinet therefore offered to give evidence to the Committee on the basis of the information which he had amassed in the course of his

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inquiry. I appreciate that, notwithstanding its formal powers, in the event the Committee decided, albeit reluctantly, to take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary.

I recognise at once that differences between Select Committees and the Executive are not confined to the Westland inquiry. I realise that the Trade and Industry Select Committee investigating the tin crisis found it unsatisfactory that its investigation had to be carried out under that constraint. The Government were acting in accordance wit'. established conventions, which form the basis on which civil servants give evidence before Select Committees. But what the Committee sought would have implied a change in those conventions.

The Government believe it is important that the conventions should continue to obtain and to be observed in the present form by Ministers, officials and Select Committee.

Mr. Douglas: Surely the clear implication is that the Government should withdraw paragraph 44 of the response.

Mr. Biffen: I shall come to that point, because it is the Government's view that paragraph 44 is intended to sustain what they believe to be the existing position—*[Interruption.]*

Sir Edward du Cann: I am sure that it does not.

Mr. Biffen: I hope that I can proceed with my speech so that I can persuade my right hon. Friend that this is a matter on which there can be genuine discussion.

Within the conventions the Government have sought to reach a mutually satisfactory arrangement in all their dealings with Select Committees. So far, I have shown how, in disagreements with Select Committees, the Government have sought to act helpfully within the traditional conventions. They have not altered those conventions, nor do they seek to do so. Despite that, it has been suggested in Fleet street in past days that the Government's response to the fourth report of the Select Committee on Defence is in some way breaking new ground and that it seeks to weaken the entire Select Committee system. This is as damaging as it is untrue.

Attention has been directed especially to the final sentence of paragraph 44 of the Government's response, to which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) referred. It says that the Government propose to make it clear to civil servants giving evidence to Select Committees that they should not answer questions which are, or appear to be, directed to their conduct or that of other named civil servants. It has been represented as a way of making any future Select Committee inquiry ineffective. It does not, and is not intended, to do anything of the sort. Instead, the Government's response to the Select Committee on Defence seeks to restate the principles of accountability and to reinforce the conventions which support and give effect to those principles.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: The Public Accounts Committee does just that week after week. Parliament votes money and the accounting officer is responsible for its expenditure. His conduct comes before the Committee. Less than two years ago, after careful consideration, I had to rebuke an accounting officer in strong terms, having given him in private session the opportunity to withdraw. He did not withdraw. I rebuked him and the Secretary of State had to dismiss him. That can be the result of such an examination, but such an examination will be impossible if that last sentence remains.

Mr. Biffen: I assure the right hon. Gentleman that he is putting an entirely different interpretation upon it. I hope that by the end of my speech I will have convinced him either that he is mistaken or that it is still a matter that we can discuss.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"] I am sorry if I have shot the fox. Sometimes things happen that way.

I should explain why I believe that this restatement of principles and the setting out of their consequences is necessary. The work of departmental Select Committees is of relatively recent origin. The Committees are bound to try to develop their roles so as to fulfil their responsibilities as they see fit. Even so, we judge that there are signs that Select Committees are looking to assign responsibility to individual named civil servants. That would cut across the principle that it is Ministers who are answerable to the House. On account of this, we have put down the marker contained in paragraph 44.

Many factors have led us to the view that Select Committees should not act as disciplinary tribunals. The first is the weakening of overall ministerial accountability. There is also already a comprehensive and detailed disciplinary system for the Civil Service.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): The right hon. Gentleman said that the Government are putting down a marker with this sentence in paragraph 44. Will he give an undertaking to the House, in line with what he said, that the matter can be further discussed and that no instructions will be issued to civil servants until the discussion has taken place and it has come before the House again for a decision?

Mr. Biffen: By the time I have finished my speech, I hope that I shall have satisfied the hon. Gentleman and made him unhappy, because I can give him that assurance.

Select Committees could not properly be grafted on to that system, however carefully it is carried out. Examination of conduct by Select Committees must necessarily contain an element of unfairness. The civil servants appearing before them are still subject to Ministers' instructions in answering questions and are without the safeguards and rights attached to the disciplinary procedures.

To some extent, this debate could not exist without Bernard Ingham, to judge by some of the speeches made this afternoon, but the speech of the right hon. Member for Dudley, East was redolent of hostility towards that civil servant.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, almost grudgingly, that he believed that Mr. Ingham had more power than a Member of Parliament and, indeed, a member of the Cabinet. All I am saying is that this is hardly the atmosphere in which to expect these people to be subject to the processes of any disciplinary implications of a Select Committee. It is all too easy to resort to the naming of individuals on the Floor of the House and elsewhere, but conventions govern these things and it is proper that the House should try to strike a realistic balance.

Given these arguments, the Government's proposal in paragraph 44 of their response to the Defence Select

Committee was designed to underline the intractable problems that would arise should Select Committees involve themselves in disciplinary matters. Unfortunately, however, the Government have been represented as meaning that no official would in future answer questions about any course of action followed by himself or any of his colleagues. There is no question of this.

As now, if something has gone amiss, a Select Committee will be free to seek an account from the Minister concerned or from a senior official representing the Minister. This could cover what has gone amiss, why it went amiss, what has been done to correct and remedy what has gone wrong and to prevent a recurrence. In short, we do not seek to prevent Select Committees from pursuing their inquiries into the expenditure, administration and policies of Departments.

As for departmental expenditure, the Public Accounts Committee has the special function of examining the accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by Parliament. The Government are fully aware of the unique position of, and the conventions surrounding, the Public Accounts Committee. It is not the Government's intention to alter in any way the basis of the accountability of accounting officers to the Public Accounts Committee. It is, of course, also the case that although the accounting officer answers personally to the Public Accounts Committee for the aspects of his Department's activities which concern that Committee, he himself remains ultimately responsible to his Minister in all things.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): As we grind inexorably and somewhat boringly to the end of this peroration, may I ask whether it would not be proper for the Government to give some time to debate the relationship between the Government and Select Committees rather than to relate it to this subject? I had hoped to hear something about helicopters, but I have heard nothing.

Mr. Biffen: I assure my hon. Friend that a great deal of the debate was about Select Committees, and it would have been exceedingly remiss had I not answered in these terms.

As for the work of other Select Committees, I imagine that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee may well wish to consider further the role of civil servants in relation to Select Committees. I hope that what I have said will be helpful to the Committee in such consideration.

I can assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) that the Government will seek to contribute constructively to the Committee's work within the general principles set out in the Government's response and in what I have said this evening. I look forward to seeing the result of its inquiry.

My right hon. Friend has another interest in this area as well as being Chairman of the Liaison Committee. This Committee will, of course, have a special role in looking at how in practice the work of Select Committees evolves in the context of the Government's response and the new guidelines for officials which will be drawn up. These will be intended to sustain — not undermine — existing practices. Even so, I can assure the House that they will not be finally and formally issued until the Liaison Committee has had a chance to see and comment upon them. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) will at least take that as a token of good intent.

We have debated exhaustively the defence implications of Westland and have looked in detail at the decision-making connected with it. Technically, this is a procedural motion on the Adjournment. Many hon. Members have no desire to adjourn and no desire for the 10 o'clock rule; they just want endless debate on the Westland topic, not to try to find better ways of accountability but to use the debate as a lever in their political objectives.

Question put, That this House do now adjourn:—

The House divided: Ayes 185, Noes 342.

Division No. 302] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce

Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Commercial Agents

10.16 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4554/79, Amendment to the proposal for a Council Directive on the co-ordination of the laws of the member states relating to self-employed commercial agents, and of the Explanatory Memoranda by the Department of Trade and Industry, dated 13th March 1984 and 4th July 1986; and supports the Government's intention to agree to the adoption of this directive.

This proposal deals with the legal relationship between a principal and his "commercial agent", who is defined in the latest text of the draft directive as

"a self-employed intermediary who has continuing authority to negotiate the sale or the purchase of goods on behalf of another person . . . or to negotiate and conclude such transactions on behalf of and in the name of that principal."

The directive is proposed under article 57(2) and article 100 of the treaty of Rome. Its main purposes are to reduce differences in the existing laws applied in member states and to strengthen the position of commercial agents in relation to their principals. As now drafted, the directive would require a principal to provide specific documentation and information to the commercial agent, impose various requirements relating to the commercial agent's entitlement to commission, require written contracts on request with minimum periods of notice, and give commercial agents a right to compensation at the cessation of a contract.

I should emphasise that we are now concerned only with self-employed agents negotiating the sale or purchase of goods. The directive does not apply to services, so the wide range of service agencies — travel agents, literary and theatrical agents, advertising agents, stockbrokers and so on—are not affected.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Clark: I will, but before I do I should like to say that we are dealing with something the technicality of which makes it essentially arid. I am always delighted to engage in an exchange of views with my hon. Friend, but I hope that my giving way to him will not be regarded as a general precedent—*[Interruption.]* I hope the House will acknowledge that I am always ready to give way in normal circumstances, but I feel that it is desirable to proceed as expeditiously as possible today. With that cautionary note, I give way to my hon. Friend.

Sir John Page: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Realising the aridity of the subject, I wish to dip my mug into the oasis of his great knowledge. My hon. Friend referred to "stockbrokers and so on." As the author of what is known as the Page Act, the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act 1977, I should like to ask whether insurance brokers are "and so on".

Mr. Clark: I do not know the answer to that.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Yes, they are.

Mr. Clark: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's assurance. I was going to proceed. Although I do not know, and I could not give a categoric assurance—and "categoric" is the right word—none the less it looks as if "and so on" would include insurance brokers, and I accept the hon. Gentleman's assurance on that.

Furthermore, the directive includes an option to exclude persons whose activities as agents are deemed by national law to be secondary. Thus, we can make provisions to ensure that the many part-time agents selling goods from mail order catalogues will not be affected. Also, there are some specific exclusions—for example, for company directors, as agents of the company, for receivers, operators in the commodity market, and contracts of unremunerated agency.

In this country there are different opinions on the need for the directive. The principals, represented by the Confederation of British Industry and other trade organisations, together with bodies representing lawyers, remain opposed in principle and to certain detail. In contrast, the manufacturers' agents, represented primarily by the United Commercial Travellers Association section of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, and the Manufacturers Agents Association continue to support its early adoption. Indeed, they would like a directive with stronger provisions.

Estimates suggest that there is a total of about 20,000 manufacturers' agents in the United Kingdom. It is believed that a very high percentage operate as one-man businesses, although some agencies are handled by major international business houses. Those making a case for manufacturers' agents say that small agents find it difficult to obtain written contracts and to get all the information they need to verify that they are being paid the correct amount of commission, and that some suffer because their commission is not paid when it is due. They have complained that agents can be used to build up sales in an unpromising market and then put aside, without compensation, when the business has reached a level where the principal can set up his own sales organisation. About half the member states now have laws concerning the relationship between agent and principal, but in the United Kingdom the absence of a legal requirement for a formal contract incorporating basic safeguards has led to insecurity and uncertainty for a group of people who are doing a useful job, particularly as regards helping in the establishment of new and usually small manufacturing businesses.

Against that, the CBI and other organisations representing the principal continue to regard the directive as unnecessary. They have commented that the agent is not necessarily the weaker party and that the directive might not be in the best interests of small companies which use agents. Concern has also been expressed about the requirements of the directive regarding the provision of information to agents, carrying the risk of disclosure of commercial secrets.

Throughout the discussions with the Commission and other member states we have continued to refer to the problems caused for the United Kingdom by this directive and we have maintained a general reserve. Many of these reservations related to the original draft of the directive, which has since been heavily modified during lengthy negotiations within the Council working group.

I am glad to tell the House that, in recognition of the United Kingdom's problems, I have obtained the proposal that the United Kingdom should be granted a transitional period of four years, in addition to the three-year period provided for in article 36(1), for implementation into national law. The effect would be that there would be a seven-year period before any implementation in the United Kingdom was obligatory as regards new contracts.

The proposal under consideration is complex. The objective is to strike a balance between the needs of the agents and the concern of the principals. We now have a draft which addresses itself to the limited area of the activities of manufacturers' agents and we no longer need to worry about its implications for agents' activities operating in many other areas. Also, much detail has been eliminated and the drafting improved. In particular, the United Kingdom has been offered, as a concession, a significant additional transitional period which will give us time to consult about the ensuing adjustment to our agency law.

On balance, and given the differences of view within the United Kingdom itself, my conclusion is that the present draft, with a specific derogation for us, represents a reasonable result, which I recommend to the House. Subject to securing a specific derogation, I propose to lift our general reserve and seek adoption of the draft directive by the Council at its next session.

10.26 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): This is a somewhat curious parliamentary occasion, in the sense that the Minister for Trade has proposed legislation. Normally, I imagine that when legislation is proposed by the Government a substantial case is made, some enthusiasm is displayed, and some sign is given that the Government have put their weight and hard work behind a measure. I think that I was not alone in detecting a certain lack of enthusiasm by the Minister for the measure.

There is a powerful case to be made, although the Minister did not make it. It is a British case rather than an EEC case. It has been made over many years by ASTMS, among others — in fact, my own union has done so—and I am sure that it will be developed by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle). I propose to do no more than summarise the case.

In many of the relationships between principal and agent with which we are concerned, the agent is the weaker party. Very often, the agent has great difficulty in getting written confirmation of his contract.

Mr. Alan Clark: I said it.

Mr. Gould: The Minister says that he said it. However, he read from a brief, rather than investing it with his personal authority and enthusiasm. Very often, agents do not get written contracts, and they have difficulty in enforcing the terms of the contract. Sometimes, they have difficulty in receiving their commission. Often, they are left with responsibility for bad debts. Sometimes when they have worked long and faithfully for a principal and have built up an unpromising business, they are discarded at the moment the business becomes more attractive and profitable. Therefore, the agent is left in a position of great uncertainty and insecurity.

If the Government had truly believed the case and had adopted it as their own, the Minister would not have dragged his heels for so many years. He would have stood at the Dispatch Box proposing some British or United Kingdom legislation to deal with that mischief. If he had done so, I think that all hon. Members would have given the legislative proposal a much more enthusiastic and warmer welcome than is possible given the form and the manner in which the Minister put his case tonight.

If there were a piece of British mischief to be dealt with, we should have had British legislation to do that. In that way we would have overcome a number of the difficulties that arise because we are now required to endorse in what has hitherto been a matter of private contract the application of a continental code which in many respects is inappropriate and far too rigid for the purpose.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does not this instrument have a double advantage in that it helps weaker agents vis-a-vis stronger principals not only those acting within the United Kingdom but those acting between the national frontiers of the member states?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is right, but of course that would apply whether or not we were legislating along these lines. If we had our own legislation which achieved a more British and therefore a more appropriate system, we would have the harmonisation which is desirable. Equally, principals operating through agents in the EEC countries could take advantage of the provisions in the directive. Few people would disagree — even my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North would agree — that some aspects of the proposal are inappropriate and should be changed, and that there are difficulties in applying to the British situation the very rigid concepts of a continental code.

I remind the House of the history of this matter. The legislative history begins in a sense in 1976, although the campaign began well before then. On 2 May 1978, in the debate eventually held on the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee, the Minister's predecessor stood at the Dispatch Box and argued vehemently on the Opposition's behalf against any such measure. He put a powerful case. Since the Conservatives arrived in office, as far as I can tell they have devoted all their energy to cutting down, holding back and frustrating the measure in various ways. Some of the proposals they have succeeded in implementing are to be welcomed. The fact that it is now possible to limit the ambit of the measure so that it does not cover part-time mail order agents is helpful.

There are still substantial doubts, which the Minister did not fully allay. There are doubts as to whether we really need this law, and as to whether the absence of total harmonisation on these matters throughout the EEC truly has in any real sense operated as a barrier to trade. Even those who oppose the measure — the principals, represented by the CBI, and the chambers of commerce —are already using agents in EEC countries under this body of rules. In a sense this meets the point raised by the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). It is not immediately clear why, for our own internal purposes, we should change law which in many respects has worked perfectly well, is suited to our conditions and is in the interests of harmonisation, and have to comply with the EEC directive.

It is worth pointing out—this point has been made in recent years, although perhaps not in the earlier debate —that when the Commission looked at the directive in an earlier form it commented:

> "The substance, presentation and drafting contained defects such as to render it unsuitable even as a basis for negotiation."

It is hard to conceive of a more damaging stricture. Doubts remain as to the measure's legal basis in the treaty and the case for harmonisation. There are questions about whether this is not just harmonisation for harmonisation's sake.

[Mr. Gould]

Even at this late date in the saga, when the Minister, with all the reluctance which he demonstrates so charmingly, is prepared to say that he will let the measure pass under various conditions, the Government's position is that their approval is conditional on the derogation which gives them not just the three-year transitional period but an additional four years. In other words, the Government are recommending to the House a measure that will not take effect for another seven years—when, I am glad to say, they will long since have departed from the scene.

That means that so little confidence do the Government and the Minister have in this measure that he is not prepared to say that the Government put their authority behind it and so will see it into law. The Minister is instead saying that the Government do not like this measure but they have been compelled to yield by all sorts of pressure by our EEC colleagues, but they will yield in such a way that it will be their successors—I do not suppose the Minister hopes that they will be successors of a different party, but he must at least recognise that possibility—to pick up the pieces.

That raises the real question—if the Minister and the Government are so unenthusiastic about this measure that they are not prepared to make a United Kingdom case for legislation, and if they put all their energies into frustrating what the EEC proposes, and even now will defer implementation of the measure for seven years, why is the Minister recommending the directive in the first place? The answer is shameful. It is that this is not legislation by conviction and commitment, but legislation as a result of pressure—legislation by proxy. It is not the Minister putting forward these proposals.

We deserve a case to be made by somebody who believes in this measure, and whose auhority is behind it, and the Minister has not put such a case. That is not good enough for the House of Commons, and I think that I know that the Minister in his heart of hearts agrees. He must concede that, in that great mish-mash of pressures such as the British presidency and the internal market, this is yet one more of those comparatively small issues that, one by one and reluctantly, we concede and concede. That is no way to proceed with a legislative programme, and the Minister has not done the House a service in bringing the measure forward in this way.

10.37 pm

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): I am honoured to be given a second helping on this important debate. Earlier, I showed paternalism for insurance brokers, who I now understand are excluded from this measure. From a constituency point of view, I have something further to say. In my constituency there is a magnificant Edwardian building in which I know that my hon. Friend the Minister would take a great interest, which used to be known as the Royal Commercial Travellers' School. For many years, until seven or eight years ago, it was the headquarters and the ethos of commercial travellers. They are also Conservative travellers, because to a man they support the ideas of private enterprise that I embrace. The Conservative commercial travellers had their base in my constituency.

I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), and I was surprised that he bothered to chide my hon. Friend the Minister for saying that there should have been United Kingdom legislation. I cannot imagine anything more stupid or more wasteful of time, energy and work in the Department than to reproduce United Kingdom legislation that might, at any possible time thereafter, be subsumed or inhaled by EEC legislation. It is much more sensible to go straight from the present loose agency arrangements to embracing the EEC idea.

Mr. Gould: That is an interesting doctrine. As the EEC now has legislative power over the whole spectrum of governmental activity, what limits would the hon. Gentleman place on his doctrine?

Sir John Page: I think that the hon. Gentleman has lost the thread of my argument already. I was trying to follow his criticism that there should have been United Kingdom legislation of a different nature first. That seemed to be an unusual route. It seemed to be an unusual way of adopting an EEC position on this matter.

Wearing the hat of the commercial traveller in my constituency, and supporting his interests, I was rather disappointed at my hon. Friend the Minister's lukewarm reaction to the proposals. The time has long past when more careful legislation was needed to clarify the relationship between the self-employed agent and the principal. Although I have not studied the new legislation in depth, I understand that those on whose behalf I speak tonight, the commercial travellers organisations, welcome and support the proposals, although the CBI and the chambers of commerce are against them. Seven years is a long time for the new legislation to take effect, and I hope that it will not be necessary for the full seven years to pass before the ideas behind the legislation and the new responsibilities of companies towards their agents are recognised by both sides.

10.41 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I must first declare an interest as president of ASTMS. There are many commercial travellers in the outer sections of the union. They are extremely concerned about the length of time involved. If many of them were present tonight—and some are—I am sure that they would be extremely disappointed with the way in which the Minister presented the proposal. He did not appear to have mastered his brief, and he did not appear enthusiastic about the proposals. This issue is no laughing matter to my members.

The year 1976 has been mentioned already, but this matter dates back to 1961, before we joined the EEC. When we were due to join the EEC in 1972, there was great hope that a conclusion would be reached on this directive, but that was put off as new members joined the Community.

My members have been waiting a long time for a measure which they believe will strengthen them. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) rightly said that we understand why the CBI and chambers of commerce are against the proposals. However, the agents are in a weak position.

I should have thought that Tory Members would welcome the proposals. After all, the agents are the kind of people that the Tory party is trying to encourage. These people go out and try to get business. They stimulate

enterprise. I am not sure that many of these agents will vote for the Tory party after the way in which the proposals were presented.

Having said that my members welcome the proposals, I must go on to say that there are some ways in which they believe they could be strengthened, because that would help them. My members need to be given a measure of security. The agents are in a precarious position. Often they go out, build up the business and then find that their agency has been terminated, after they have done all the hard work. The manufacturer tells the agent that his business is no longer needed.

We welcome the proposal for the contract. However, it is important that, instead of that contract being on request to defend the agent, it should be mandatory. Article 5 refers to complying with regional instructions given by a principal. When they are conducting their business, many of these agents do not have only one agency. They have several in order to make a living. Consequently, if they obey one principal, that might be in contradiction of the other agencies that they represent. It might not be in their interests. We must ensure that what an agent is asked to do is not in direct contradiction of his other agencies and is not detrimental to him.

Article 11 refers to remuneration tied to the place where an agent carries out his activities. Everyone knows that agents go out and about. Indeed, often their business is done, not in a building or office, but in a territory. The article should be widened to include an agents's territory.

Article 12 refers to commission on transactions. Anyone who has been involved in selling—as I have been — knows that one of the difficulties with commercial transactions is that often people place orders direct with the manufacturer. The agent does not then receive commission. Rather than referring simply to commission on transactions, the article should refer to all transactions, taking into account the work done by the agent in his territory. He should have the benefit from that work, even if the orders are placed direct with the manufacturer. That would be welcomed by many of my members.

Article 30 refers to giving entitlement to indemnity to the agent, but that can be reported upon to the Council only after eight years. That is far too long—it should be one year. If it is thought that that is too soon—and I noted the Minister's general reluctance about the directive —the period should be a maximum of three years.

Under article 32, relating to competition, an agent has the right to be consulted, and to be part of the agreement on the extent of the competition. If the contract is terminated, the agent should not be deprived of a living because of a restriction on competition. The agent may have been selling a particular article, and he may be prevented from going into his territory. That is not the right way to go about matters.

Article 36 says that the measure should come into force in 36 months' time. We are talking, not about 36 months, but about seven years to bring in the directive. That is ludicrous. Either it is to be brought in, or it is not. This is typical of the approach to the directive. Anything can happen in seven years. It is far too long a period. Surely after all the time that we have been waiting for the directive —I referred back as far as 1961 — to achieve some measure of security for these hard-working people, to wait another seven years is far too long. It should be a maximum of 12 to 18 months.

The directive would not affect existing contracts. There is lack of security, because the contracts could be removed at any time and the agent deprived of all the work that he had done. Again seven years is far too long in this case. It is nonsense. The maximum should be three years.

The Minister must at long last grasp the nettle. Instead of waiting for seven years, this directive ought to be brought into force at once. It is important to ensure that contracts are mandatory, then justice will be done to the agents who have had to wait for far too long for this directive. That would provide security for a very hard working bunch of people. They are doing all that they possibly can to do what the Government are always talking about.

The Government say that they want to encourage small businesses, but in this case they are acting against the best interests of those who go out and sell the goods that they have produced. The Minister should give them some encouragement and bring this directive into force as soon as possible—not after seven years, but within 12 or 18 months.

10.52 pm

Mr. Alan Clark: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to the debate.

There were certain inconsistencies in the argument of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). He repeated some of the arguments that I used in recommending this directive to the House. He said that a powerful case had been made out for it and that it had been needed for a long time, but he also said that perhaps, after all, we did not need it, that we ought to have our own legislation and that this was not the right way to approach the matter. I do not want to trade guarded reproaches with him, but the inconsistencies in his argument betrayed a certain lack of enthusiasm for the directive.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not having congratulated him upon his election during my opening speech. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and I shared certain attitudes towards some of the elements in this whole affair when we were on the Back Benches. It is ironic to the highest degree that those two hon. Members, for whom I retain a high measure of personal respect, should be arguing for the speedy implementation of a Community directive and saying that there should be no delay.

The proposed derogation is highly satisfactory. It will give us time to listen to representations and to hear what the interested parties have to say. However, the hon. Member for Warrington, North says that, because this is a Community directive, it must be implemented soon. Is this not a rather unusual role for him to be playing?

Mr. Hoyle: The Minister is quite right. As colleagues, we have opposed many EEC proposals, but that does not mean that we should oppose all of them. Sometimes some good comes out of the EEC. It is not often that I find it, but I believe that there is some good to be found in this directive. Surely we have already waited for far too long. We understand the arguments on both sides. I appeal to the Minister as a reasonable person not to make us wait for another seven years. I ask him to bring this directive into operation as speedily as possible.

Mr. Clark: Seven years is the maximum period. Many of these contracts could be dealt with well within that

[Mr. Clark]

period. Every hon. Member who has spoken — I pay particular tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) who has a historic centre within his constituency—has done so from the point of view of the agents. I hope that in my introductory remarks I made it quite clear that the Government recognise the need to afford a measure of protection.

This directive in its new form has to represent a compromise between the interests of two essentially conflicting groups — the principals and the agents. We think we have that compromise at about the right level. There have been considerable changes. The hon. Member for Dagenham quoted the Law Commission strictures, but these changes, both in drafting and in content, have been made in the light of those strictures.

I hope that the House broadly agrees that the derogation is helpful. It will give us time to consider other representations, because there are other views on this, even though in this debate we have had the view of only one side. Given the general acceptance of the need to make progress in the internal market, the substantial improvements that have been made in the substance of this directive, as a result of negotiations at official level, enable it to be viewed as such a substantial move away from its predecessor that we can give it our full support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4554/79, Amendment to the proposal for a Council Directive on the co-ordination of the laws of the member states relating to self-employed commercial agents, and of the Explanatory Memoranda by the Department of Trade and Industry, dated 13th March 1984 and 4th July 1986; and supports the Government's intention to agree to the adoption of this directive.

Warminster Bypass

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

10.56 pm

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): Although to me the importance of the Warminster bypass is of almost unique and unrivalled importance—it is engraved on my heart — I am aware that my hon. Friend the Minister has many bypasses to contend with. No doubt they are all of equal importance to him and none is engraved on his heart.

The Warminster bypass saga has gone on for so long that it merits a debate in the House. I have held meetings about it with Ministers in different Governments since 1966. It suffered, as did many other projected routes, from changes in the road development plans of successive Governments, and I will not weary my hon. Friend and hon. Members who are listening to this important debate with a historical account of events since 1966.

In 1979 the bypass was firmly programmed and since that time I have had meetings with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) and my hon. Friends the Members for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) and for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), all of whom have been Transport Ministers. I have not had a meeting with the present Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), but we have corresponded on the subject. It is precisely because I found his last letter of 14 October in reply to my letter of 30 September quite unsatisfactory that I am raising the matter in this debate.

Throughout the latter part of 1984 I emphasised to my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South, who was the Minister for Transport at that time, the importance of an announcement being made about construction of the bypass not later than mid-December 1984. On 20 December, I received a letter from my hon. Friend, together with a press statement, announcing that construction work could start at about the end of 1985. I went to see him again in January 1985 and stressed how essential it was that there should be no delay after the statutory period for consultation had passed. There had been too many unfulfilled promises and local opinion had, understandably, been sceptical about assurances emanating from my hon. Friend's Department.

For the next six months I was in regular contact with my hon. Friend in the House of Commons and with his officials in the private office. I was repeatedly told that the final decision letter and line orders were being considered as top priority and confidently assured that the mid-May deadline would be met.

Although that was not the case, on 5 June 1985 my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South wrote to me stating that the further consultations about the route of the Warminster bypass had been successfully completed. He enclosed a copy of the press notice announcing that the bypass would be constructed incorporating the alternative route A put forward by the objectors.

Shortly after that, I was informed that the line orders had been made. The statutory challenge period would finish on 9 August 1985 and no objections were expected. Side road orders and compulsory purchase orders were also being made, and then advertised in the local papers with a six-week challenge period. Again, I was assured that

no problems were anticipated over that. Supplementary side road orders were being looked at by the legal department and would be published in September with objections finishing at the end of October. Work would start in May 1986 with a two-year construction period envisaged.

When a legal challenge to the validity of the orders relating to the bypass was unexpectedly made, I was again assured that, although there might be a slight delay, it would be only slight as other statutory procedures had to be carried out which would be done at the same time.

I therefore found it surprising that in his letter of 10 September my hon. Friend the Minister suggested that the High Court action was entirely responsible for the delay. In that letter my hon. Friend concluded by saying:

"We hope to get work under way by around the turn of the year."

Bearing in mind the history which I have been recounting, I did not much care for the use of the word "hope". Also, I felt that "around the turn of the year" opened up endless possibilities for further procrastination. My interpretation of "around the turn of the year" would be the end of December, early January. Did the Minister share my interpretation?

In order to clarify those points, I wrote to my hon. Friend on 30 September asking for a final and irrevocable date. The concluding sentence of his reply dated 14 October was as disappointing and non-committal as the one in the letter of 10 September. He said:

"We expect that the successful contractor will start work early in the New Year, unless really bad weather causes him to postpone his operations."

I have been told by my hon. Friend that all the statutory procedures have been completed. What I want now, after 21 years of talk about the Warminster bypass, is a firm date from him when work on the bypass will start and a specific assurance that that date will not be changed. I do not think that in the circumstances it is unreasonable to ask for that.

11.4 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): First, may I acknowledge the persistent efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) on behalf of his constituents in relation to this much-needed bypass. There is no difference between me, my predecessors and him on that.

I have always tried to avoid giving assurances about dates when things would happen. Building and planning roads is very much like dinghy sailing. One can make mistakes or things can happen that blow one off course, and there are few ways of accelerating the process except by joining the construction of a road oneself. If it is of any comfort to my hon. Friend, I should say that the building of roads is normally completed before the planned date, while the planning of roads and going through the procedures often takes longer. There is a temptation for someone in my position always to give the best possible estimate and then have to disappoint an hon. Friend or a colleague in the Opposition when something intervenes.

I am well aware of the urgent need to provide relief to the residents of Warminster from the increasing nuisance, inconvenience and danger arising from the passage of unnecessary traffic through the town. I share my hon. Friend's wish that a bypass be provided at the earliest possible date. As he knows, the provision of bypasses is a top priority of the Government, but it is not practical to undertake the provision of all those required at the same time. We try to work out a system of priorities to ensure that the towns in greatest need receive their bypasses as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend will know that the bypass for Warminster was shown in the report "National Roads: England 1985", which was published in June that year, for a start of construction in the period up to March 1987. We intend to meet that commitment. I am confident that this can be achieved. As my hon. Friend knows, tenders for the construction of the Warminster bypass were invited in September this year and are due to be returned on 2 December. I am to award the contract by Christmas, so a start of work in January should be possible, depending upon the weather. I hope that that answers my hon. Friend's final question as to when we intend the work to start. I hope that that is near enough to the turn of the year. I recognise that this is not as early as my hon. Friend wished, but an earlier start is not possible.

My hon. Friend also knows that the scheme has had its share of difficulties, and he mentioned some of them. Draft orders were first published in November 1982. In the light of objections then received, various changes were made, leading to the publication of modified orders in July 1983. A public inquiry was held towards the end of that year. In response to representations made at the public inquiry, the inspector subsequently recommended that the route of the bypass should be amended to reduce its impact on Norton Bavant. That recommendation required careful consideration, and it was not until December 1984 that the decision of the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport to adopt the revised route was announced.

Consultations then took place with those affected by the revised route. Objections were received, and it was June 1985 before the relevant order could be made. The associated side roads and compulsory purchase orders were made in August that year. New orders in respect of the alterations required to the existing road network in the vicinity of Norton Bavant, as a consequence of the change in the route, then had to be prepared and published. This was achieved before the end of the year, and the orders were subsequently made in May 1986.

Under normal circumstances, we would then have been able to proceed with the remaining preparatory work, to have final discussions with landowners and others and to invite tenders. If that had been possible, the work could have started in the autumn. Unfortunately, however, a local farmer, who was dissatisfied with the inspector's recommendation and the decision of the Secretaries of State over access to some of his fields after the bypass was built, decided to challenge in the High Court the validity of the side roads and compulsory purchase orders made a few months earlier. The making of this challenge effectively prevented the Department from completing the remaining preparatory work and, of course, the preparation and issue of invitations to contractors to tender for construction of the bypass. For the Department to have continued with such preparations would have been to attract, at best, accusations of arrogance. There is a long waiting list of cases to be heard in the High Court and the Department had to take its turn. It was not until July this year that the challenge came before the court. Fortunately, this was determined in the Department's favour, but the time taken up by waiting for the hearing could not be recovered.

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

Two months later the Department had completed the final preparatory stages and tenders were invited in September. The Department has done all that could be done, within the limitations imposed by the statutory procedures and the legal processes, to bring this scheme to fruition in time to allow a start of work before March next year. Work should start in January.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 30 October 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read the Second time upon Tuesday 4 November.

EXETER CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Exeter City Council Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration, signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a declaration had been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

Ordered,

That the Petition against the Bill presented in the present Session which stands referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farming Industry

1. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the farming industry; and what subjects were discussed.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): I am frequently in touch with representatives of the farming industry on a wide range of agricultural matters.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister appreciate the great uncertainty that exists in agriculture? Is he aware of the existence of large surpluses and the market decline in land values, which cause farmers great anxiety and feelings of insecurity? Secondly, the Government's commitment to conservation has not led them to present their position with clarity on farm and forest development in environmentally sensitive areas or, for that matter, anywhere else.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that there is a certain amount of uncertainty throughout agriculture worldwide, where massive surpluses exist and export markets become fewer and fewer. I believe that our work over the past few years in Brussels to return the common agricultural policy to reality and prudence is a move in the right direction. I am surprised by the hon. Gentleman's comments about conservation. He will recall that we have had a warm welcome from both sides of the House and from many other places to our proposals for environmentally sensitive areas. We have specified these areas and we are now negotiating terms with those concerned.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the dairying community, and certainly in my constituency, there is strong objection in principle to the imposition of the new statutory inspection charges, and that when there is not objection in principle there is a strong feeling that the charges are too high anyway?

Mr. Jopling: I have discussed with the leaders of the various sections of the farmers unions the statutory charges. My hon. Friend will recall that the proposed charge per visit under the milk and dairy regulations will be about £90. That figures will reflect actual costs. It is important to bear in mind that farmers with high standards of hygiene on their farms will be visited only once every three years, or even less frequently. A £90 per visit charge is equivalent to only £30 a year or less for those who have high standards of hygiene on their farms.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister confirm the report that was carried on the front page of *The Independent* that he is to take on the farming lobby? If it is true that the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury and the Departments of Employment and Environment are engaged in secret discussions about alternative land resource use and employment, does he agree that that will increase uncertainty? Will he confirm that the debate is being conducted in secret, and would it not be better to conduct it in public with the National Farmers Union?

Mr. Jopling: The Government's policy is to continue to support British agriculture, which has made a massive contribution to our economy for a long time. The hon. Gentleman should not make statements such as he has just made, because agriculture is our finest industry.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend explain, if he can, why he considers it just that farmers should have to pay for inspections that they do not want at a cost of £90 when factories do not have to pay for inspections by factory inspectors or by health and safety inspectors? Why should farmers have to pay when others do not?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend will know that the Government took the view that we should make certain charges on certain statutory duties. The National Farmers Union asked us especially whether we could be sure not to make charges for tuberculosis and brucellosis testing. I am aware of the anxieties, but charging is appropriate when the producer derives a benefit. The high quality and reputation of the product helps to maintain consumption, and thus benefits the producer.

Mr. John: Has the Minister had raised with him in his discussions the question of intereference by French farmers in the British lamb trade? What steps, beyond writing to his French opposite number and to the President of the Commission, does he propose to take? Will he make it clear in words that even M. Guillaume can understand that the French do not have a unique prescriptive right to strain the CAP rules, and that if we were to respond in kind they would have much more to lose?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman should know that I have twice spoken to M. Guillaume about the hijacking incident. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has spoken to President Mitterrand about the matter. We were both given assurances that fresh and firm instructions would go out to all police authorities and that compensation would be paid.

The House must be in no doubt about the strength of the Government's resolve on this matter. Actions by lawless French producers or interference with imports are absolutely unacceptable to us.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Bearing in mind the Government's oft-stated wish to support farming and the problems caused to the port of Aberdeen as a result of the fall in oil prices, would it not be sensible to insist that all imports of Perrier water should be routed into Britain via Aberdeen, where they would be subjected to chemical analysis? Would that not encourage the French to stop interfering with our sheep?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend gives us, in general terms, food for thought. I am sure he agrees that, when we are criticising lawlessness by citizens of France, the last thing that we should do is resort to lawlessness ourselves.

Milk Marketing Board

4. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): My colleagues and I frequently meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board. My last formal meeting with him was on 13 May, when we discussed a wide range of subjects.

Mr. Colvin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. When he next meets the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, will he ask how many dairy farmers have agreed to take the new outgoers scheme, which would pay them 16·3p per litre over seven years? Does he agree that that, given the 22-25p per litre that farmers can get for selling their quota on the open market, not many will take up the scheme? Why can we not top up our outgoers scheme as do the Germans, who will increase theirs to about 22-27p a litre, payable over five years?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend made a slip of the tongue. It is 18p a litre. Although it it is true that the Germans are topping up theirs, the French are paying less. No other country is topping up the amount to its farmers. Already a large number of people have written in for the details, and some people already wish to leave the industry in this way. We shall have to see how the system works. There is always disagreement in these circumstances about the right level at which to pitch it, but we have to stick where we are.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend explain to dairy farmers, some of whom are perhaps without the same benefits of intelligence and education as he has, how it is right that they are paying taxes so that the Russians can get 1 million tonnes of British corn at a third of the price that our dairy farmers are having to pay for it?

Mr. Speaker: Is that relevant?

Mr. Marlow: It is about dairy farming, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gummer: Many of the farmers are aware that if the Community is 14·5 per cent. over-supplied, it is better to get something for particularly old butter, which nobody wants, than to get nothing for it.

Cereals

5. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the co-responsibility levy on cereals will have on the amount of cereals produced within the European Economic Community.

6. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the operation of the cereals co-responsibility levy.

Mr. Jopling: The levy was not in force when plantings for the 1986 harvest were under way, and its effect on future harvests will be difficult to isolate because of numerous other factors at work. I have already made clear my attitude to this measure, for example in my statement to the Select Committee on Agriculture on 16 July.

Mr. Baker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the co-responsibility levy will not reduce the amount of cereal grown, and that any set-aside programme will not achieve it on its own, because the worst land will be set aside and on the best land productivity will be increased? Will he do something to alleviate the present uncertainty by announcing, or getting his Common Market partners to announce, that any future restriction on production of cereals will be based on the yields of earlier years, or a combination of years, so as to reduce the distortion and the present increase in production of cereals?

Mr. Jopling: I do not think that that would be the best way to deal with the problem, given that yields have increased in this country probably faster than in any other Community country. We would be in danger of shooting ourselves through the foot if we were to do it that way. I have always agreed with my hon. Friend that we need a packet of measures to deal with the cereals problem. I do not like, and the House does not like, the co-responsibility levy, and the House would, I think, like me, prefer a reduction in price. With the package of measures, we must have a stringent price policy and tough rules for grain that is suitable for intervention. At the same time, we have made proposals for a land diversion policy so that those farmers who find it most difficult to continue to produce grain at a profit may be given alternative enterprises to grain production, which is in a huge surplus.

Mr. Rogers: Is this levy not inherently discriminatory, and does not the discrimination create an incentive to take avoiding action and to look for loopholes? Is not the creation of these loopholes bad government at both national and European level? Why does the Minister not become tough with the Europeans and lay down what we want rather than what they want?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been here when I made a statement at the end of the price fixing negotiations this year. We were able to remove all the items that discriminated against the United Kingdom in lamb, beef and cereals. Unlike the original Commission proposal for the cereals co-responsibility levy, the present system does not discriminate against the United Kingdom. It is satisfactory from that point of view, but, like the hon. Gentleman, I would much rather not have had the co-responsibility levy.

Mr. Jackson: Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on his set-aside proposals? They are part of a much more satisfactory alternative for the future of cereals than co-responsibility. Will he say something about the progress that he is making with these proposals?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the land diversion proposals. This matter was discussed informally by the Council of Ministers and I was pleased by the constructive response of the other Ministers to the proposals. The matter is to be further examined by the Commission in Brussels. I hope that before too long it will emerge as a concrete proposal.

Mr. Deakins: As, in a Community of 12, Britain's Presidency will always come round in the second half of the year, what steps does the Minister propose to take now to ensure that cereal prices are reduced in the first half of next year?

Mr. Jopling: The early part of next year will be discussed on the basis of the proposals that the Commission will produce at the turn of the year. Obviously I cannot anticipate at this time what they will be. However, the hon. Gentleman knows very well that the price that the farmer receives for grain is based not entirely upon the support price that is agreed by the Council of Ministers. If he wants an example, he will see that this year farmers have obtained unexpectedly high prices for grain because of a buoyant export market, from which British agriculture has benefited.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best evidence of over-production of feedwheat comes from today's edition of *The Times*, which says that the EEC is so desperate to get rid of its surplus feedwheat that it is continuing to sell substantial quantities of it, with an export subsidy of £82·76, to Syria?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend will realise that there is no embargo on United Kingdom exports to Syria, but no special export refunds exist for the sale of cereals to Syria. The United Kingdom will oppose any proposal to introduce such a refund.

Mr. Home Robertson: That was rather a pathetic answer.

To return to the co-responsibility levy, will the Minister accept that it is hitting consumers every bit as much as it is hitting producers, that it is an administrative nightmare fraught with unfair anomalies, that it cannot cover the cost of export subsidies and that it will have no impact on the production of surpluses? Does the Minister believe in this levy? If he does not, will he join many of his hon. Friends in supporting our prayer against the levy next week?

Mr. Jopling: I cannot anticipate next week's business. As for the co-responsibility levy being a tax on consumers, the hon. Gentleman should know that as the levy is charged on sales into intervention it will affect market prices across the board, especially those for feed grains. It should reduce the cost of grain to livestock farmers who mill their food, and it should not increase the cost of grain to compounders. The hon. Gentleman must check on the facts before making such statements.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that the inclusion of oats in the co-responsibility levy scheme is wholly and grossly unfair, because it is not a commodity that is in surplus? Will he use his good offices to try to get oats out of the scheme for next year?

Mr. Jopling: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that in certain circumstances oats, barley and certain feedwheat are interchangeable. If, therefore, we are to have a co-responsibility levy, the exemption of oats would create the danger of distorting the market.

Mr. John Townend: Will my right hon. Friend deal with a problem in operating the levy that is worrying farmers? If a merchant buys grain from a farmer he collects the levy, but if he sells that grain to a farmer who mills on his own farm he receives the rebate. However, there is no way of ensuring that that rebate is paid to the farmer. Is it possible to institute a method of auditing the books of merchants?

Mr. Jopling: I have talked to my hon. Friend's constituents about this matter. I do not think that it will be possible to change the rules this year to enable such an audit to be introduced. However, we are prepared to look at the possibility and to discuss it with the Commission to see whether it might be possible in future to have a different system for operating the levy.

7. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of agricultural land in England has been used for growing cereals in the current year: and what was the proportion 10 years previously.

Mr. Gummer: The provisional results of the June agricultural census shows that cereals were grown on 34 per cent. of the total agricultural area in England in 1986, compared with 30·7 per cent. in 1976.

Mr. Callaghan: What is the Minister's estimate of the land that needs to be taken out of cereal production in order to align supply and demand?

Mr. Gummer: No, because, as the hon. Gentleman will know, such an estimate depends upon where the land is, what sort of land it is and the circumstances. If we could have a package of measures, including restraint on price, to ensure that there are alternative crops, thereby providing some kind of land diversion, probably with rotation by fallowing, that would meet the need.

Sir Peter Horden: Do these figures not clearly demonstrate that cereal farmers have done far too well for far too long? What proposals does my right hon. Friend intend to produce to the European Commission to reduce substantially the subsidies on cereals?

Mr. Gummer: As my hon. Friend knows, the measures taken this year will substantially reduce the price below what it would have been. That will be done by a mixture of changes in quality control and the intervention rules, coupled with the effect of the co-responsibility levy. We would have much preferred not to have this co-responsibility levy, because it is an odd and unacceptable way of doing it. We would have preferred a reduction in price, and that must by the basis of any future policy.

Mr Campbell-Savours: Why did the Minister not hold an inquiry into the the allegations by Mr. Pedley that witnesses in the BBC trial were interfered with when he was chairman——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What has this to do with cereal levies?

Sir John Farr: I should like to return to the original question. Has my right hon. Friend reached any conclusion about the acreage that he would like to see in cereals in 10 years?

Mr. Gummer: No. We can deal with cereals by providing the farmer with alternative uses for land by reducing the price of cereals in order to bring about a much better balance between supply and demand. It was a pleasure to have a question from a sane Member.

Mr. John: I am not clear whether the last remark by the Minister is in order, Mr. Speaker, but no doubt if you heard it you will rule on it.

Does the Minister accept that the new strains of wheat talked about in the *Sunday Telegraph* promise vastly increased production from diminishing cereal land? Is that not an argument for overall production control and not for taking land out of production, because technically we could easily produce as much or more cereals on less land.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman would need carefully to qualify what he means by overall production control. If he means some sort of quota system, I should like him to explain how one could reasonably quota, for example, over 1 million grain farmers in Italy. That is not a sensible way to operate. The real difficulty about over-production is that it is not a problem today nor will it be a problem in two to three years. The difficulty is that the problem increases almost exponentially as technology improves the situation. As my right hon. Friend said, we must have a system which meets the problem not in one way, but through a whole package of measures.

8. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his forecast for cereal production for 1986.

Mr. Gummer: United Kingdom production of cereals in 1986 is estimated at 24·6 million tonnes.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the uncertainty about the nature of the measures to reduce surpluses has been the principal source of anxiety among cereal producers? While proposals to encourage the use of marginal land for other purposes such as forestry are very welcome, above all a clear and firm sign is needed on how the problem of surpluses is to be tackled.

Mr. Gummer: I agree with my hon. Friend, and that is why the United Kingdom is taking the lead in seeking a package of measures which will relieve that uncertainty. The uncertainty arises primarily from the fact that we have moved from the position in which a farmer was certain about a market because there was a shortage in the world, into a situation today where there is uncertainty in the market because we are in a world of surpluses.

Mr. Mark Hughes: Does the Minister accept that to dispose of the expected surplus to Syria under the arrangements — which we cannot now change — in the Community, is offensive? Does he also agree that to dispose of those surpluses to Russia and allow Russian pig farmers to buy British grain at £36 a tonne, when we have to pay for them to receive it at that price, is disgraceful?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is only underlining the reason why we have made a major effort and are taking the lead to ensure that we bring supply and demand into balance.

Mr. Latham: Will my right hon. Friend explain precisely what are the Government's objections to a compulsory set-aside system? Do the objections stem from the fact that more than only marginal land would be taken out of production?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend has to accept that Britain is one of the most efficient producers of cereals in the Community and the world. We do not want a system which so restricts cereal production that it causes unfair discrimination against the good producer. That is one of the dangers of having a compulsory system. It is much better to have a voluntary system where those who wish to go out can do so and so enable those who can produce cereals competitively and efficiently — as many of the United Kingdom farmers do—to continue to do that.

Fisheries Policy

9. **Dr. Godman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning progress during his Presidency of the Agricultural Council of Ministers with regard to EEC fisheries policy.

Mr. Jopling: I am delighted to report that at the first meeting of the Fisheries Ministers under the United Kingdom Presidency on 22 and 23 September, I was able to secure a decision on the package of technical conservation measures which had been outstanding since the beginning of the year. This clears the decks for further work on control and on structural measures, on which I hope for decisions before the end of the year.

Dr. Godman: Does the Minister agree that the heart of any fisheries policy is the need to conserve stocks of fish?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that officers and skippers of vessels in Spain in the port of Vigo organise a kitty from which they pay the fines that arise on the rare occasions when a Spanish fishery vessel is caught by our fishery protection vessels? Efficient policing will deplete the Spanish kitty, but what will happen to that policing effort when two or three fisheries protection vessels are taken out of service to police the waters in the south Atlantic?

Mr. Jopling: The fisheries protection squadron of the Royal Navy and the arrangements operated by the various Departments in the United Kingdom are the envy of many countries in the Community. We intend to ensure the continuation of the rules on conservation which were agreed in Brussels, and which safeguard the opportunities for fishermen to get the maximum yield from the waters of the Community. We hope that those fishermen who are tempted to transgress the rules will realise that that does not pay.

Mr. Hicks: Surely my right hon. Friend cannot be satisfied with the monitoring and policing of the fisheries policy. Is he aware that fishermen in the south-west feel particularly vulnerable over this aspect?

Mr. Jopling: That is why we have been pressing the Community and the Commission in Brussels very hard indeed to increase the size of the inspectorate within the Commission so that countries which do not have as efficient an enforcement policy are made to observe the rules properly.

Mr. Hugh Brown: What consultations has the Minister had with his fellow Ministers in the EEC about arrangements for the Falkland Islands? Given that the authorities there will have the power to issue licences and quotas, does our membership of the EEC oblige us to give priority to members of the EEC?

Mr. Jopling: The responsibility for fisheries protection and arrangments for the Falkland Islands is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister aware that many people in the industry believe that far too much of the British fleet is antiquated, inefficient, ineffective and unprofitable? Does he agree that much more investment in the British fleet is needed to make it competitive and modern? Is he aware that many people regard the Government's restructuring policy as a dismal failure? What does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman could not have heard me when I said that I hoped that the success of the first meeting of the Fisheries Council will enable us to clear the decks for further work on structural measures, among other things, on which I hope we shall have decisions before the end of the year.

Mr. Wallace: On the subject of the negotiations between the Commission and Norway over the share of North sea herring, does the Minister agree that last year British fishermen were dismayed by the 40 per cent. deal which the Norwegians won and that they are now alarmed that the Norwegian fishermen see that as a minimum settlement for this year's negotiations? Can the Minister assure the House that during his Presidency the Community, and, through that, the British fishing fleet, will get a better deal with Norway than last year for North sea herring?

Mr. Jopling: We are discussing the negotiations with Norway with the Commission in advance this year. I agree that the way in which the Commission conducted the negotiations last year was less than satisfactory.

Farm Safety

10. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve safety on farms.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): Responsibilities for farm safety rest primarily with the Health and Safety Executive. However, considerable emphasis is placed on safety considerations in advice given by my Department to farmers and particular attention is paid to safety in the training courses run by the Agricultural Training Board. The safety record in the industry must be improved. It is essential that everyone who lives or works on farms, and especially those responsible for children, should become much more safety conscious. I hope that they will read the chilling but excellent report of the Health and Safety Executive, "Agricultural Black Spot—A Study of Fatal Accidents".

Mr. Dixon: May I congratulate, or commiserate with, the hon. Gentleman on his appointment to the Government Front Bench?

Is he aware that in 1985 farm deaths rose by over one fifth on the previous year? Is he further aware that farming is the second most dangerous industry in Britain? Will he ensure that there are no further cuts in the numbers of agricultural inspectors? Indeed, will he ensure that more are appointed?

Mr. Thompson: I am aware of the number of fatalities last year. I am glad to report that to date such deaths are at a much lower level this year. The inspectors are nine understaffed at 165, but I believe that the Health and Safety Executive is doing all that it can to recruit more inspectors.

Sir John Farr: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his first speech from the Dispatch Box. Will he confirm that there will be no cuts in health and safety provision for farm workers and that the HSE service, which does such a good job, will be sustained and closely monitored by the Government?

Mr. Thompson: I can confirm all that my hon. Friend has asked.

Miss Maynard: Is the Minister aware that one hazard faced by farm workers is that of noise? I understand that farm safety inspectors are supplied with decibel meters. How many times have they been used, and have there been any prosecutions in the past two years?

Mr. Thomspon: I do not know the answer to either of those questions, but I shall write to the hon. Lady.

Mr. Randall: May I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister on his appointment? I hope, however, that it will not be too long before he and all his colleagues are sitting on the Opposition side of the House.

Is he aware that the main cause of farm accidents is tractors overturning? What plans does the Minister have to extend existing regulations to make roll-over protection compulsory on all tractors?

Mr. Thompson: I agree that one third of accidents involve self-propelled vehicles. The Health and Safety Executive is continually looking at such suggestions as the hon. Member has put forward.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

11. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will indicate the business of the next meeting of the Agriculture Council of the European Community.

Mr. Jopling: The agenda for the next EC Agriculture Council is expected to include items on the reform of the beef regime and emergency measures in the milk sector as well as a number of internal market items.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that he has a fight on his hands over the beef sector proposals and that it will be every bit as tough as the annual price-fixing round? Is he ready for that?

Mr. Jopling: Yes, Sir. We have been holding constructive discussions at an official level in the Community. I have made it clear that several of the beef proposals are unacceptable to us because of discrimination. I shall continue to resist them. */Interruption./* I think especially of the limit of 50 head for the proposed beef premium.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members please refrain from chatting, as I cannot hear.

Mr. Livsey: Does the Minister agree that retaining beef variable premiums is the best way of securing the beef industry for the years to come? As President, will he ensure that they will be maintained beyond the present financial year?

Mr. Jopling: I assure the hon. Gentleman that in our discussions so far the British delegation has made it clear that the variable beef premium system has served us well and has led to beef being eaten instead of being put into cold store. I am glad that the Commission has proposed a premium system. In the weeks ahead we shall work hard to amend the existing proposals on beef premiums so that they are more acceptable to us.

Sir Peter Mills: Will the Minister put before the Council the scandalous position of Irish beef exports to Britain? The Irish are getting a subsidy of £151 per cow. That cannot go on. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is a devaluation of our green pound in order to rectify the problem?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend will be aware that we have made an official proposal to the Commission in Brussels that there should be a devaluation of the green pound, particularly in the beef sector, where massive distortions have arisen as a result of a 6 per cent. devaluation of the green punt. So far the Commission has not reacted to our request, but we continue to press very hard.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Minister aware that the all-time record butter mountains both in Britain and elsewhere in Europe will be a fitting monument for this British Presidency of the Council of Agriculture Ministers? Now that we have 2·4 million tonnes of butter and skimmed milk powder in intervention stores around the Community, will the Minister accept that a deteriorating butter mountain is not a good investment for the taxpayer and that we need positive incentives to restructure the dairy industry?

Before the Minister starts talking about the outgoers scheme, will he tell us exactly how many people have submitted applications for the scheme?

Mr. Jopling: So far we have had 750 inquiries from farmers to whom we have sent application forms. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's snide remarks at the beginning of his question regarding the size of the butter surplus, he will be aware that nobody has done more than successive Ministers in this Administration to try to bring the milk regime back to a degree of rationality and reality. Before the hon. Gentleman makes any more remarks of that sort he should look at the records to see in how many months during the time his party was in power the butter mountain reached record levels.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 October 1986.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Wareing: Has the Prime Minister studied the community care manifesto published during the party conferences by Dr. Barnardo's, MIND, MENCAP and the Spastics Society, which calls, among other things, for legislation to abolish discrimination against disabled people? Is this not an opportunity for the right hon. Lady to redeem her Government's pledge to disabled people after the disgraceful manoeuvres against the Bill I introduced three years ago and the disgraceful introduction this week of availability for work tests, which is already denying supplementary benefit to some of the most disadvantaged, disabled people in our society?

The Prime Minister: This Government's record of help for the disabled exceeds that of any other Government, as the hon. Gentleman well knows.

Mr. McCrindle: In view of several statements this week on mortgage tax relief, including one from the Leader of the Opposition, will the Prime Minister make it clear that the Government will continue broadly in its present form mortgage tax relief and thus reassure many millions of people who have become owner-occupiers since 1979 and whose family budgets critically depend on the continuation of this provision?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is well aware, under this Government the present system of mortgage tax relief will continue. I believe that ours is the only party which stands four-square behind the system.

Q2. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 October 1986.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the Prime Minister, in her moments of reflection between engagements, reconsider the answer that she gave in a recent interview to Colin MacKay of STV? She said:

"I am not satisfied that there is a fundamental desire for devolution."

Surely all the evidence is to the contrary, and it is silly for the Government to pretend otherwise.

Does the Prime Minister also appreciate that, given her opinion that devolution would lead to the break-up of Great Britain, she is shoulder to shoulder in the trenches with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)? Perhaps the call is, "Come back, all is forgiven."

The Prime Minister: I confirm what I said in the interview and I would repeat every word again today.

Mr. Squire: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction on his reported comments yesterday to the effect that the Government are to make a specific form of assistance available to many young people in the south-east who find it so difficult at present to obtain housing? Does she appreciate that many of us welcome that wholeheartedly?

The Prime Minister: I understand that that is a reference to a breakthrough in housing finance under which it will be possible to build for assured tenancies with a mixture of public and private finance. I believe that it is a breakthrough and that it will help many young people, as well as helping to take a number of people out of bed-and-breakfast accommodation, which they would otherwise have to occupy.

Q3. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: Is it not a fact that the Prime Minister's obvious lack of judgment and credibility are causing increasing embarrassment, even to her own party? How much would it cost the Tory establishment to see her off at Victoria station?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is whistling in the dark, whether at Victoria station or elsewhere.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my right hon. Friend accept that it is not just in Brent and Hackney where the thought police are on the march in education? In Birmingham teachers are being threatened that if they advise on what is best for their students and parents in the way of grammar school education they will be disciplined. Does she not think that it is an evil practice when Socialists say that if all cannot be eagles then all must be sparrows? Is not the pursuit of excellence what the country needs?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I warmly support my hon. Friend in what he said. Grammar schools are an extremely important part of our education system and they stand for the pursuit of excellence. Many of us owed our future to those schools.

Mr. Kinnock: The Government have not volunteered a statement on their views about the Reykjavik talks or responded to our request that they should do so. Will the Prime Minister tell me whether she recalls saying to the United States Congress last year that nothing in the ABM treaty precludes research but that if research led to the "possible deployment of new defence systems" it would be, in her words,

"a matter of negotiation under the treaty"?

Is that still her position in view of the much less clear and less positive view expressed by the Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence last week? Can she tell us, specifically, what is the Government's position on star wars and the ABM treaty? *[Interruption.]* If we had had a statement, this request would not have been necessary.

Can the Prime Minister also say, specifically, what is her attitude to the adoption of the zero/zero option as discussed at Reykjavik? *[Interruption.]* As I said, if we had had a statement, this would not be necessary. In view of President Reagan's clear reassertion yesterday that he will persist—*[Interruption]*—I shall persist, too.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: In view of President Reagan's clear reassertion yesterday that he intended to persist, very sensibly with his proposals on ballistic missile systems in future negotiations, will the Prime Minister tell us— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have only 15 minutes and points of order do not help.

Mr. Kinnock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I repeat, had we had a statement from the Government, these questions would not have been be necessary.

In view of President Reagan's clear reassertion yesterday that he wanted to pursue his proposition to get rid of ballistic missiles over 10 years, is the Prime Minister prepared to reconsider— *[Interruption.]* —the purchase of the Trident ballistic system, especially in view of the pressures that that imposes on our conventional defence programme?

The Prime Minister: I seem to remember that the other place was sitting at the time of the Reykjavik talks and a statement was made there. So a statement was made by Her Majesty's Government to Parliament on those talks.

Intermediate nuclear forces were subject to the SDI proposal at Reykjavik and we believe President Reagan was absolutely right in refusing to stop research on SDI. The future of the INF talks also appeared to be made subject to that, so the whole question is in issue again. It will be sorted out at the talks at Geneva. We are in discussion, through the NATO Alliance, with the United States about those talks and the proposals that have been made.

We believe in an independent nuclear deterrent. The British and French independent nuclear deterrents were not part of those talks. The Conservative party believes that the independent nuclear deterrent is vital to our future defence. We shall keep it, and the Trident programme will go ahead.

Mr. Sayeed: Will my right hon. Friend explain today why the European Commission is selling cut-price grain to Syria? Does she recognise how irritating that is and the considerable anger that that subsidy to state terrorism has caused?

The Prime Minister: The question of sales of European grain to Syria has arisen before. Normal refunds apply to all external sales and I am afraid that there is nothing we can do about that. However, I understand that there will be no special rates of refund to Syria following the meeting of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary with the Foreign Ministers a few days ago.

Dr. Owen: Does the Prime Minister agree that if President Reagan was successful in negotiating the withdrawal of all ballistic missiles, both Soviet and American, it would be unlikely that the United States would be happy to go on selling us Trident? Is that not one more case for looking seriously at the cruise missile option?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will be the first to understand when I say that the defence of a nation consists not only of its nuclear stance and independent nuclear deterrent, but also of chemical and conventional weapons. For anyone to suggest that one can get rid of ballistic missiles without considering conventional weapons and the impossibility of achieving equality in conventional forces in the alleged time scale is utterly absurd. President Reagan did not agree at Reykjavik, as the House knows.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that our defence is based upon deterrence — the deterrence of alliances and of massive retaliation if attacked — the crucial pillar of which is the Atlantic Alliance? Does she now see that our key alliance is under threat from within, when partners within that Alliance are not only not prepared to support actions against terrorism but unilaterally to negotiate with terrorists? Secondly, does my right hon. Friend not see that our Alliance is under threat from within the Labour and so-called alliance parties—parties that march to the same drum, the drum of Socialism—which is a serious threat to our national security?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the NATO Alliance is under threat and under attack from the Opposition. Any change in the fundamental doctrine of flexible response, of which nuclear weapons are a fundamental part, is a matter for the whole Alliance to discuss and could not be decided separately. The fact is that the nuclear deterrent has kept the peace for 40 years — peace from nuclear weapons and from conventional war—and that is the most important factor of all.

Q4. **Mrs. Golding** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Golding: Will the Prime Minister explain to the House how an increase in the bank rate will lead to a reduction in unemployment and a reduction in the cost of living?

The Prime Minister: An increase in bank rate is occasionally necessary to hold down the long-term rate of inflation. As many hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, inflation breeds unemployment — it does not cure it.

Dr. M. S. Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the importance of the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition — *[Interruption.]* It is the most important matter that we could be discussing. It is a matter of life or death. Will the Prime Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should address his point of order to me.

Dr. Miller: May I ask whether the right hon. Lady will tell the yah-boos on her side that she takes this matter seriously?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Sir Peter Emery: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of order, will you consider consulting Back-Bench Members as well as the usual channels on whether it would be in the interests of the House to return to the practice of Mr. Speaker Hylton-Foster, whereby an hon. Member when called asked only one question of a Minister rather than a series? It would mean that many more hon. Members could ask questions and the House could proceed much more quickly.

Mr. Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, if he is here regularly for Prime Minister's Question Time, that is what I do, but it depends on how the questions fall on the Order Paper. I should point out, however, that it has been a long-standing convention that the Leader of the Opposition has an opportunity to ask more than one question. Today he asked only one question.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope I am wrong, but I thought I saw you reading from a list of names of Conservative Members and calling them to ask supplementary questions of the Prime Minister. Is that because representations are made to you — *[Interruption.]* I am asking for guidance from Mr. Speaker, not from Conservative Members. Is it the case, Mr. Speaker, that Members make representations to you before Question Time to be called to ask supplementary questions, or do you genuinely look around and choose at random?

Mr. Speaker: I am delighted to have the opportunity to clear up the matter. I must say to the hon. Gentleman and to the whole House that if representations are made to me beforehand that an hon. Member wishes to be called during Prime Minister's Question Time, that hon. Member will not be called. I make that absolutely clear. As to what goes on here—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the House will listen to this. My secretary lists the number of times that hon. Members have been called to put a supplementary question——

Mr. Hamilton: Well, I should be next then.

Mr. Speaker: There is nothing secret about it. The hon. Gentleman can have a look for himself. Against those names is marked the number of times that hon. Members have been called to put a supplementary question. I seek to ensure that every Member who seeks to put a question to the Prime Minister during a Parliament has an equal opportunity. I hope the House will agree that that is fair. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Faulds: Further to——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Faulds: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think I am the only one who says that.

Mr. Faulds: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We elder statesmen occasionally get impatient with these younger puppies. While absolutely understanding and accepting your explanation, Mr. Speaker, with the deep and due regard that I hold for you, is it not a disproportionate way

of choosing who should be called in Prime Minister's Question Time, for the following reason. Some of us assiduously attend Prime Minister's Question Time——

Mr. Mark Hughes: And nothing else.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Faulds: It is very heartening to see this occasional stranger. The point I was trying to make when that rather ludicrous comment was made about those of us who attend this Parliament daily was this. Is it not an incorrect way to assess the eagerness of hon. Members simply to have a list and see that they are all called in due proportion, when some of us are here every Prime Minister's Question Time, rise at every Prime Minister's Question Time, and make a much more frequent and regular effort to be called? Would it not be fairer to count our appearances in attempting to be called than simply to go through a list?

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a matter for my discretion. I seek to treat the House fairly. I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman has said, but as most of the questions originally addressed to the Prime Minister appear on the Order paper in identical form it does not seem unfair that hon. Members whose questions are reached should be called.

Mr. Tony Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker I am interested to learn that you have a list of people who have asked questions of the Prime Minister. Can you tell me when I last asked a question of the Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has been called three times this Session on Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. Hamilton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I noticed that a moment ago you said that when an hon. Member has put down a question to the Prime Minister he will get some consideration. Are you aware that many hon. Members put down questions, but when we see that we are beyond Question No. 10 we immediately withdraw them? Does that enter your mind at all?

Mr. Speaker: It does enter my mind. That would be unwise. The hon. Gentleman did not know the way in which I was dealing with this before today, so perhaps he will not do that in future. The hon. Member has been called five times.

Mr. George Robertson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hate to prolong this issue and, as you know, I rarely do so. Is it possible to make an opportunity available so that the Prime Minister can clarify the comments she made to the effect that the defence of the realm depends on chemical weapons. This is something that we find disturbing.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter that can be considered today. There will be other opportunities next week.

Mr. Kinnock: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. By way of a constructive suggestion, may I say that if we had a form of extra time as a consequence of prolonged and pointless interruption during Prime Minister's Question Time it might assist the conduct of the House, because the alternative is to have extra time which takes the form of points of order, and that is as tedious for you, Mr. Speaker, as it is for most hon. Members.

Business of the House

3.39 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 3 NOVEMBER — Consideration of Lords amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill.

TUESDAY 4 NOVEMBER — Consideration of Lords amendments to the Public Order Bill and the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

Motion on the Channel Tunnel Bill.

WEDNESDAY 5 NOVEMBER—Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the National Health Service (Amendment) Bill.

Motion relating to the Cereals Co-responsibility Levy Regulations.

Motion on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order.

THURSDAY 6 NOVEMBER — Opposition Day (20th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Failure of the Government's Economic Strategy".

FRIDAY 7 NOVEMBER — The House will meet for prorogation at 9.30 am.

The House may be asked to consider any Lords messages and other business as necessary. The new Session will be opened on Wednesday 12 November.

Mr. Kinnock: There are conflicting reports about the date of the Chancellor's autumn statement. Will the Leader of the House tell us exactly when the Chancellor will make his statement?

The right hon. Gentleman will know that there is considerable resentment on both sides of the House about paragraph 44 of the Government's response to the fourth report of the Select Committee on Defence on Westland plc. Paragraph 44 is considered to be a deliberate attempt to curtail the necessary rights of inquiry of Select Committees. When will the paragraph be withdrawn by Her Majesty's Government?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there is widespread support throughout the House for an office of technology assessment to assist hon. Members on both sides of the House? Will he ensure that the House is given ample time to debate this proposal, which we understand the Prime Minister is resisting in some peculiar luddite form?

The chairman of the Conservative party today issued a press release, which is couched in typically authoritarian terms, demanding that the vice-chairman of the BBC make, in the right hon. Gentleman's words, a

"thorough reappraisal of the managerial and editorial standards of the BBC".

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I hear the cheers from a certain quarter of the House. This is a further attempt by the chairman of the Tory party to undermine the independence of the corporation. When will we have a chance to debate the various efforts of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) to threaten the BBC in a variety of forms?

A series of important foreign affairs issues have arisen since the summer recess, including South Africa, the Reykjavik summit, relations with Syria and the need to get full anti-terrorist co-operation from the other countries of the EEC. Will there be an early chance to debate foreign affairs after the Queen's Speech?

In light of the widespread disquiet throughout the community about the spread of acquired immunity deficiency syndrome in Britain and in other countries, will the Government give time in the near future to debate the matter fully?

Mr. Biffen: I shall deal with the points put by the Leader of the Opposition in the sequence in which they were presented. I am not in a position to say when the autumn statement will be made. Clearly, it is a matter of continuing attention.

If the right hon. Gentleman has a chance over the weekend to read the entire debate about civil servants appearing before Select Committees, he may find that his anxieties are a little misplaced.

Mr. Kinnock: I certainly found my reading very interesting last weekend.

Mr. Biffen: It just goes to show that weekend reading tends to be much more reflective than pre-breakfast summaries.

Mr. Kinnock: Last week's reading.

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman, in his rather different way, might find next weekend's reading of some value. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee is considering the Government's response on the point he mentioned. The right hon. Gentleman might bear that in mind.

I shall examine the possibility of a debate about the office of technology assessment, but I cannot respond positively at this moment.

I must repudiate the intemperate language used about my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. It showed a certain end of term exuberance, which I understand, but I do not think it helps us to put into proper context the serious matters that would be employed in debating the Peacock report. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that we shall try to arrange an early debate on the Peacock report in the next Session.

The Queen's Speech will provide an opportunity for a debate on foreign affairs.

I note the request for a debate on AIDS. That is a matter of the utmost significance, and certainly we can look at it through the usual channels.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Has my right hon. Friend observed that early-day motion 280 now bears 108 signatures?

[That this House notes the widespread concern felt in Parliament by eminent scientists, by other responsible observers and by members of the public who have viewed programmes on the matter screened by Channel 4, that Anne Maguire, Patrick Maguire (senior), Vincent Maguire (then aged 17), Patrick Maguire (then aged 14), Sean Smyth, Patrick O'Neill and the late Giuseppe Conlon, sentenced in 1976 to long terms of imprisonment since served, now appear, despite confirmation of their convictions at the time by the Court of Appeal, to have been entirely innocent of the crime with which they were charged; further notes at the conclusion of debate in the other place on 17th May 1985, the recognition by the Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Home Office of the strength of feeling in this matter in that House and his pledge to draw the attention of the Secretary

of State for the Home Department to what had been said; and therefore earnestly urges the Secretary of State for the Home Department in the interests of the highest standards of British justice of which this country needs to feel rightly proud, to move without delay for a review of these convictions, either under the provisions of section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968, or by such other public process of review as he may deem appropriate to this disturbing case.]

The motion concerns the miscarriage of justice in the Maguire case. Is my right hon. Friend aware that I shall abate my request for parliamentary time if his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will refer the matter to the Court of Appeal?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has pursued the matter with dignity and persuasiveness. I shall certainly put that point to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the Leader of the House accept that, as the Government were prepared to accept a constructive amendment in the other place yesterday to the Housing (Scotland) Bill, that may shorten the time taken for debate on that measure and allow some time for Scottish Members to debate devolution, because, from the answer given by the Prime Minister today to my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), she does not know what Scottish opinion is and that might be educative for her?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that the serried ranks of Labour and Liberal Members were all that correct in communicating to the House the nature of Scottish opinion on devolution when the matter was debated in the 1970s. I am quite cheerful about facing the prospect of another round of devolution, more government, more bureaucracy and more examples of the underlying unity between the alliance and the Labour party, but I am not sure that we can arrange that next week.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): As we move towards the next Session, can my right hon. Friend assure me, in the interests of both sides of the House, that there will be no overload of legislation in the next Session and that there will be sensible and limited legislation so that Parliament can do its job properly?

Mr. Biffen: I understand that my hon. Friend approaches his final Session of parliamentary service ever hopeful. I should not mind betting that he has travelled hopefully every Session that there has ever been and has never yet arrived.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): If the Leader of the House is as careful as Mr. Speaker in keeping records, he will know that the number of embarrassing defeats suffered by the Government in the other place reached 100 last week. The issue was the Government's attempt to protect negligent health authorities with the cloak of Crown immunity. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether next week the Government will seek to reverse last week's decision, and, if they do, will he take note of the fact that that will be opposed by Labour Members, trade union members, the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing and the majority of Members in the other place?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what the right hon. Gentleman says about the other place having secured its ton, and I draw from it the conclusion that we now have a transformed situation whereby the Labour Benches accept the legitimacy of the second Chamber having that type of influence over the legislation of this House. I note what the right hon. Gentleman says about the point of substance, and clearly that will be a matter for debate next week.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. Friend give urgent consideration to an early debate on the plight of police preserved rate widows, whose average age is 82? An agreement has now been reached in committee E of the police negotiating board. As it affects nearly every Member of the House in his constituency, it is important that committee E's agreement be ratified and agreed.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says, but I think that in the first instance I could assist him by referring the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Whether or not we can debate the Lords amendments to the Channel Tunnel Bill next week, does the Leader of the House agree that it is amazing that British Rail has not been called to give evidence to the Select Committee on the use of Waterloo as the sole flagship terminal for Channel tunnel traffic? Is he aware, for example, that the traffic may be the equivalent of a jumbo jet arriving at or leaving from Waterloo every three and a half minutes, and that there may be passenger traffic of 20 million people, yet British Rail is giving estimates of traffic congestion on only 6 million? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the House has the proper means of debating the matter?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman invites me to comment upon the behaviour of a Committee that is in the process of taking evidence. There is a wise convention, in my view, that I do not respond to such invitations.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. Friend may or may not be aware that on Tuesday the Parliament and Scientific Committee held a most important meeting on the subject of the OTA, at which it was concluded that the committee must continue to explore the potential and possibilities of this type of organisation for Westminster. May I assure my right hon. Friend that there is interest in this matter on both sides of the House and that the request which the Leader of the Opposition made on this topic finds widespread support?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend says about a matter of great concern to him and many other Members. There is great concern also about how any such proposals would be financed.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Leader of the House aware of the stonewalling replies that I received at the beginning of the week from the Department of Trade and Industry when I sought to question it on the privatisation of Coventry Climax in 1981 from British Leyland and on the fact that for the past five years not one penny of the price supposedly asked by the consortium which took over Coventry Climax has been paid to British Leyland? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the receiver who was brought in on the financial collapse of Coventry Climax earlier this month has confirmed that nothing has been paid? Five years have passed and 80 per cent of the original 3,000 jobs have been cut—in other

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

words, the consortium has had a free ride for five years. Surely the least we could expect is a statement from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on how the conspicuous failure of privatisation will be remedied. I would argue that that should be done by taking back into public ownership Coventry Climax and restoring the jobs that have been sacrificed.

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that I can endorse the rhetoric with which the hon. Gentleman has invested his question. I shall refer to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry his anxiety that there should be a statement on the matter.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): In view of the serious controversy that has arisen over the past week or two about the BBC, and remembering my right hon. Friend's original promise that there would be a debate on the financing of the BBC, will he make the debate sooner rather than later in view of his answer to the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate the interest in the topic and the feeling that a debate should come as soon as can be reasonably arranged in the programme for the next Session. I can understand that.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Will the Leader of the House expand on his answer to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition in respect of what is happening in the fight against acquired immunity deficiency syndrome? Will he say specifically whether discussions are being held with the research authorities into methods of combating it, including vaccines? Are the Government now prepared to inform the House and the country on the steps that they will take to try to control this epidemic?

Mr. Biffen: My reply to the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged the desirability of having such a debate, and having it as soon as possible. I quite understand the pressure for such a debate, and I hope that it can be considered through the usual channels. I cannot go further than that.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): May I ask my right hon. Friend a question on exactly the same matter as there is concern about it throughout the House? Is he aware that every day in the newspapers and on television details are given of the serious spread of the disease? We need to have a clear statement on how the Government intend, with the medical profession, to deal with it and to give proper warnings to the public of the precautions that they can take to avoid it.

Mr. Biffen: I understand my hon. Friend's point, and because I sympathise with this approach I responded in the way that I did to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Given the controversy surrounding the passage of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, will the Leader of the House consider awaiting the report of the Committee that is being set up to consider private Bills prior to bringing the Bill before the House again?

Mr. Biffen: That falls much more within the remit of the Chairman of Ways and Means than mine.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion No. 254, which has been signed by a staggering total of 270 hon. Members?

[That this House believes that overseas Civil Service pensioners should be allowed to count war service towards their pension entitlement in the same way as every other branch of the public service; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to do justice towards a small number of mostly elderly people whose working lives were spent abroad in the service of the Crown.].

There is a supporting amendment which has attracted 12 names. The motion concerns the fact that all public servants get credit in their pensions for war service unless their service was overseas. Is that not a matter of honour? Should not the Government remedy that anomaly before prorogation?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is fully entitled to underline the magnitude of the case as represented by the number of signatures to the early-day motion. He will appreciate that there will be quite a struggle to get through all of the business that is promised for next week without holding out the prospect of any more legislation or Government action being added to it. I shall of course refer my hon. Friend's comments to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In view of the blatant misuse by the Syrian authorities of the diplomatic bag for the import of terrorist arms and weapons which has, it is reported, resulted in a complete arsenal of weapons being held in the Syrian embassy, may we have a statement on the subject before the House prorogues, with special reference to what is to happen to that arsenal and whether the bag of death is to be permitted to be used to take the weapons out of the country or, more likely, to transfer them to other embassies or agencies so that they may be used in other ways?

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. and learned Gentleman says. I shall make that point to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): In view of yesterday's decision by the Press Gallery to hold an inquiry into the future of the parliamentary lobby system, will my right hon. Friend try to arrange an early debate on this aspect of Government information? As my right hon. Friend seems to be one of those Ministers or ex-Ministers who has suffered under the present system of non-attributable briefings, would he be willing to support a motion calling for the handing out of more Government information on the record by a Minister of the Crown?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has raised an interesting topic. I can only say that I cannot see any opportunity for it to be debated next week.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In view of the serious problems surrounding the imposition of fishing limits around the Falkland Islands, should we not debate this important issue at the earliest possible moment?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. There was clearly much interest in the subject when the

statement was made in the House yesterday. I am not being unreasonable in saying that the Queen's Speech debate will enable the matter to be argued.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Now that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has opened the M25, when will the House have an opportunity to debate motorway safety, the fact that only 44 miles of that motorway are lit, that more than 70 miles are unlit and that, for £9 million, it could be made safe and accidents at night reduced by 60 per cent.? Is it not time that we looked after the motorist?

Mr. Biffen: The debate on the Queen's Speech will provide my hon. Friend with the opportunity to make that very important point.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Leader of the House recall that I have raised with him before the number of signatures to early-day motions 204—

[That this House notes with concern that speech therapists, members of a highly-skilled caring profession, discharging a wide range of responsibilities, are underpaid in comparison with other National Health Service professionals doing work of equal value; notes also that speech therapy is traditionally a female profession; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to provide sufficient funds to enable speech therapists' salary levels to be increased so that speech therapists receive equal pay for work of equal value.]

—and 217—

[That this House expresses its appreciation of the valuable work performed by speech therapists; and, in expressing its concern that decreasing comparative salary levels will dissuade the ablest of individuals from entering this profession, calls upon Her Majesty's Government to ensure that speech therapists are remunerated at a level equal to that of other graduate specialists within the National Health Service.]

—about speech therapists? I have requested him to ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to make a statement. This dedicated band of professional people, mainly women, are grossly underpaid as compared with other professionals in the NHS.

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly comply with that request.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Will my right hon. Friend try to find time for a debate on aspects of our procedure, especially in view of concern about the practice of some Opposition Members who use bogus points of order to make accusations which they are unable to substantiate or are unprepared to repeat outside the House without the protection of parliamentary immunity?

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry, but I have to observe that bogus points of order are like original sin: if they were abolished, life would be all the sadder. Come the new Session, there will be rather more opportunity for the House to consider these matters. I cannot offer the prospect of time being given to it next week.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware that, in two weeks' time, Sir Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary, will be going to the Supreme Court in New South Wales to represent the British Government in the Wright memoirs trial? Is he aware that Mr. Turnbull, representing Mr. Wright, has tabled 146 questions in the court of New South Wales and is demanding answers from the British Attorney-General as to the activities of MI5 in the United Kingdom and elsewhere? Will he ensure that, in the event of those questions not being answered in the court, the Attorney-General will come to the House to make a statement, so that we can find out why the Government insist on hiding from the British people the truth about the excesses of MI5?

Mr. Biffen: I reject the charge contained in the closing words of the hon. Gentleman's question. I shall refer his points to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to the fact that the results of a number of surveys carried out in South Cleveland show that the vast majority of my constituents and others want that county to be abolished so that they can revert to the natural North Yorkshire area.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. He might find a fair number of people in South Avon who would wish to return to Somerset. I cannot anticipate what will be in the Queen's Speech, but I do not think that it would be unduly inaccurate if I did not encourage him.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Has the Leader of the House received a request from the Paymaster General, who I am glad to see in his place, for an opportunity to correct the misleading information that he gave the House the other day regarding the availability-for-work test? On several occasions, he assured the House that the questionnaire would apply only to new claimants, but it has been revealed today that unemployed people in Halifax and Newton Abbot, including elderly and disabled people, have had benefits suspended. It would seem that there is consideable confusion in unemployment benefit offices about the application of this test.

Mr. Biffen: When my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General came back to the House, he dealt with this matter most authoritatively. I have heard what the hon. Gentleman said, and I shall pass on his remark to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Bearing in mind the continuing persecution of my constituent, headmistress Miss Maureen McGoldrick, by the Brent Labour council and the perverse and evil behaviour in——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that this matter is sub judice?

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful for your advice, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I should withdraw that bit, but ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to bear in mind the perverse and evil behaviour of the Brent Labour council and the Ealing council——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is probably the issue of the case.

Mr. Greenway: I am not referring to the case.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I gave the hon. Gentleman a jolly good chance. The matter is sub judice.

Mr. Greenway: May I make my point?

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman will find it difficult. He will have to discover another way to raise the subject.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As contact seems undoubtedly to have been made between Tory Central Office and potential witnesses after legal action was initiated in the BBC libel case, is it not necessary for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to make a statement, as his remarks were inadequate? Will the Leader of the House recognise that if the chairman of the Tory party continues to make outbursts like the one that he has just made against the BBC, which clearly shows that he wants to browbeat the BBC into becoming part of the Tory Central Office, we will not be satisfied that the right hon. Gentleman answers questions only four times a year for five minutes at a time?

Mr. Biffen: If the hon. Gentleman believes that the course of justice has been perverted by any official of the Conservative party, he has a clear remedy.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Has my right hon. Friend seen two recent speeches by certain prominent people urging the housebuilding industry, in its extreme flexibility and efficiency, to concentrate its attention on renewing inner cities and those parts of our country that are desperate for refurbishment, renewal and redevelopment rather than building on green fields in the south of England? Does he agree that we should have time to discuss this important matter?

Mr. Biffen: I accept that it is an important matter, particularly in constituencies such as that represented by my hon. Friend. He could probably make a contribution in the debate on the Queen's Speech that would enable him to make his case.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, West): In view of the accusation made by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West and Tel Aviv against the Syrian Government, would it not be advisable for the Government to make a statement about Hindawi and his earlier connections with Mossad and about the bomb, which was supposedly planted by Hindawi, which had Hebrew lettering?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that that is not a matter for the Leader of the House.

Mr. Biffen: I heard the points made by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) and the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Faulds) and I do not believe that Conservative Members are entitled to intrude on private animosity.

Mr. Tony Banks: (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me despite the fact that last week I asked the Leader of the House whether it would be possible for us to have a full debate on the annual report of the London Residuary Body. He undertook to write to me. I have his letter in front of me and it says:

"It is not the Government's intention to promote a debate".

Will the Leader of the House reconsider that decision as the London Residuary Body is an unelected, unaccountable quango appointed by the Government, and there is a great deal of interest in London for an opportunity to debate matters considered by the LRB that used to be within the purview of the democratically elected Greater London council?

Mr. Biffen: Alas, this is the pitfall of asking questions. Far from being happy to reconsider the answer I gave, I am most happy to reconfirm it.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): As the person responsible for my party's health — *[Laughter.]*—which, as a qualified pharmacist, I am in a good position to be, may I make the plea that a debate on AIDS should be all party? Some estimates show that more than 100 people each day are being infected by the virus. We have a new Minister for Health and urgent matters need decisions. The Leader of the House's earlier answer that he would consult through the usual channels is not good enough. Is he not prepared to devote Government time to this important subject now?

Mr. Biffen: I gave a generous answer to the Leader of the Opposition, and I fear that, in the present straitened circumstances, the hon. Gentleman cannot recognise generosity when it is thrust before him. I shall take into account his representations.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I am not saying that I am responsible for my party. I am sure that the Leader of the House is aware that Members of Parliament have received letters from the Department of Transport saying that deregulation is taking place, and that any response that Members of Parliament wish to give the Department would be welcome. Does this mean that the Department will be given parliamentary time for those responses to be debated?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be the first to appreciate that the debate on the Queen's Speech will range sufficiently widely to include certainly a debate on transport matters generally and the specific question of dereglation.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

4 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about schoolteachers' pay and conditions of service in England and Wales. For more than two years the local authority employers and the teacher unions have been negotiating about school teachers' pay and conditions. During this time the education of the children in our schools has been repeatedly disrupted. The children have been the victims. The local authorities and teacher unions sought help from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service because they were unable to reach a settlement within the Burnham committee. Limited progress has been made as a result of ACAS's work. Some "heads of agreement" were negotiated at Coventry in July, but little has been achieved since then. Now, scandalously, further disruption is threatened. A further negotiating meeting is planned for 8 November at Nottingham. I must make the Government's position clear.

We now also have the Main committee's report about pay and conditions of service for schoolteachers in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will shortly make a statement giving the Government's response to that report. The Government regard the recommendations in that report relating to the teachers' pay structure, and to their duties and conditions of service, as well judged. We consider that similar arrangements should be adopted in England and Wales, although existing differences in practice mean that it is not appropriate to seek to apply the Main committee's findings in their entirety to England and Wales. I am therefore writing today to the chairman of the Burnham committee's management panel explaining the additional resources the Government are willing to make available for teachers' pay in England and Wales and spelling out our conditions for releasing those resources. I have placed a copy of that letter in the Vote Office.

The Government will make additional resources available only when two very important conditions are delivered. First, there must be a pay structure with differentials which reflect the varying responsibilities of teachers and the need to recruit, retain and motivate teachers throughout the school system and at all stages of their careers. The pay structure envisaged at the Coventry meeting in July does not meet this condition. A structure more in line with the recommendations in the Main committee's report is necessary, and I have set out such a structure in the letter which I have put in the Vote Office. All teachers will receive higher pay, more than half of them on promoted posts reflecting varying responsibilities. The crucial importance of head teachers, who carry the biggest responsibilities, will be recognised.

The second condition is that teachers' professional duties must be more sharply defined and clarified, leaving no room for ambiguity about their duties, and this must be carried through into enforceable contracts of employment. Contracts and conditions of service must be brought into line with the 19 points under discussion at the Coventry meeting. In particular, schoolteachers should be under an express contractual obligation to cover for absent colleagues and to be available to work at the direction of head teachers for 1,300 hours over 195 days each year. All this is set out in more detail in the letter I have placed in the Vote Office.

In return for delivery of these conditions, teachers' pay would be increased in two instalments. The first instalment would increase average schoolteachers' pay by 8·2 per cent. from 1 January 1987, and the second instalment would be a further 8·2 per cent. from 1 October 1987. These two instalments would cover the full percentage increase in average schoolteachers' pay implied by the Main committee's recommendations. This would settle teachers' pay for 1986-87 and 1987-88. The increase of 8·2 per cent. from 1 January means that teachers' pay will have increased by over 16 per cent. since 30 March of this year. Teachers will have had an average 25 per cent. increase over the two years to October 1987. This means that a good honours graduate in his third year would receive after two years of teaching £10,000, an increase of about 20 per cent. The head of the largest comprehensive would get an increase from £26,250 to £30,500. I want to emphasise that these increases are only justified by the fundamental change in the terms, conditions and structure of the service which must accompany them.

If, and only if, these conditions are met are the Government prepared to add £118 million in 1986-87 and £490 million in 1987-88 to planned expenditure on education in England and Wales. Education grant-related expenditures would be increased accordingly. Block grants to local education authorities would be increased by £56 million in 1986-87 and £200 million in 1987-88. The cost of these increases would have to be shared by taxpayers and ratepayers. We estimate that rates would increase by between 2 per cent. and 4 per cent., compared with the decisions that local authorities would otherwise have taken.

I hope that the meeting at Nottingham will accept the position I have outlined. I look to the employers and unions to act quickly and positively. I must make it clear that the matter must now be resolved on all the terms and conditions I have set out. The Government will not be prepared to amend them further, or to make any additional resources available.

Now let me turn to the future. Over the last few years it has become widely accepted that the present negotiating machinery should be replaced. The Government therefore intend to repeal the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 and to bring forward proposals to this House for new machinery which will involve an interim committee to advise the Secretary of State on conditions of service and the distribution of pay within the resources available at the appropriate time.

The Government are making these proposals in the interests of the whole country. I believe that they will be seen as fair, and continued disruption will be seen to be unforgivable in these circumstances. My proposals constitute a very special offer for very special people, and when I say "special people" I mean the children of our nation.

4.9 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that parents have a right to know why, if money is now available for teachers' pay, it was not available two years ago? Is it not the case that all the

[Mr. Giles Radice]

disruption, turmoil and damage of the prolonged teachers' dispute could have been avoided if the Government had come up with this kind of money in 1984?

Parents will also want to know how today's statement will help to improve standards. Why is there nothing in today's statement about the need to reduce the size of classes, to give time for preparation of lessons and to provide more opportunities for in-service training? All these issues were constructively and imaginatively dealt with by the employers and the teachers' unions in the Coventry agreement, which the Secretary of State has completely ignored.

But perhaps the most important question of all is this: will today's announcement improve the chance of a settlement next week at Nottingham, or will it make it harder? Is it not a fact that the Secretary of State is making almost impossible demands on the negotiators by imposing new conditions on the pay structure at this, the eleventh hour? I have to warn the Secretary of State that parents will not forgive him if his intervention today, with its hectoring tone, its last-minute demand for changes in the pay structure and its threat of an imposed solution, undermines next week's negotiations and scuppers the prospects for lasting peace in our schools.

Mr. Baker: May I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) upon his re-election to the shadow Cabinet. I refute completely his suggestion that a settlement could have been reached at any time during the last two years. The plain fact of the matter is that under the existing Burnham machinery there have been constant negotiations which have produced no settlement and that during the course of the last two years there has been disruption in our schools. The children of our country are entitled to uninterrupted education.

The hon. Gentleman asks how this will improve the standards of teaching and quality in the classroom. He will see from the letter that I have placed in the Vote Office that we are proposing five promotion posts on the basic scale ranging from an extra £900 to an extra £4,800. Those promotion posts recognise the quality of classroom teaching and mean that secondary teachers will go to an upper level, if they are worth it, of £16,500 and £17,500.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about Coventry. Perhaps I could remind him about what the Main committee said. It said:

> "We . . . wondered whether a new management structure that further reduced the number of promoted posts at a time of contraction and that offered teachers so little prospect of further improvement in career earnings once they had reached the top of the basic scale would be in the interests either of the service or of individual teachers."

The hon. Gentleman accused me of intervening and of trying to wreck the Nottingham negotiations. I hope that the Nottingham meeting will take place because details about such things as how the first 8·2 per cent. should be distributed have to be settled. I have not derailed Nottingham: I have provided a solid framework for the negotiators.

The hon. Gentleman also accused me of intervening at the eleventh hour. I remind him that at Question Time on Tuesday he accused me of dithering. Now he accuses me of being provocative. Is it provocative to announce that the Government are prepared to make substantial funds available? Is it provocative to set out a pay structure that strengthens the career prospects of all teachers? Is it provocative to expect duties and conditions to be clearly set out in contracts so that teachers, head teachers and local education authorities know where they are? That is not being provocative. This dispute has been rumbling on for over two years. I have acted today in the interests of Britain's children.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Can my right hon. Friend tell us how this excellent deal for the average teacher compares with the pay that such a teacher received when the Government came to office in 1979? Can he also tell us how that compares with the pay in 1975 under the last Labour Government? Will he accept that the parents and teachers in Britain expect no less than that the unions and the Labour party and all who, like the Conservative party, have the interests of children at heart will support this award, which will give our children the best education that we possibly can?

Mr. Baker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. I will write to him about the exact comparisons between 1975 and 1979 for the average teacher. In broad averages, the pay of a school teacher now is £11,150. By 1 January 1987, the average will be up to £12,060. By 1 October next year, it will be up to almost £13,000. I envisage that the lowest paid qualified classroom teacher will move up from £6,400 to £7,600 while a senior teacher on the maximum of his scale will go up from £15,300 to £17,500. Exact figures for individual teachers will emerge from the negotiations.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is the Secretary of State aware that most teachers and parents are sick to death of this dispute? If he is able to secure agreement on the general lines of this package he will receive plenty of thanks. However, he will get no thanks if he blows it by leaving no room for discussion with the local authorities or the teachers' unions.

The Government are now willing to listen to an independent inquiry, even though it was purely for Scotland, and to put more money on the table. Why on earth did they not do that two years ago when we were asking them for an independent inquiry? Will the Secretary of State back what he has said by telling the House that he is prepared to back state schools and that his object is not to pull all the best teachers into his own centrally controlled city schools at the expense of the state schools? Will he look again at his proposals for the future, because from the small print it is clear that he plans to take total control of teachers' pay? It also looks like total control of education from the centre.

Mr. Baker: I emphasise that the funds being made available for city technology colleges are in addition to the planned expenditure on education. That money is not at the expense of the maintained sector and I would not want to see that. Nothing that I have said in this debate in any way derails the Nottingham meeting. I have provided a solid framework for the negotiators. They can now go to Nottingham knowing that the Government's position is crystal clear on contractual duties, conditions of service, pay structure, the provision that we will make for spending on teachers' pay and on the level of grants that we will make available to local authorities.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on producing a pay

offer worth 25 per cent. over two years. That is good news for teachers and even better news for our children, who have suffered from disruption for far too long. Can my right hon. Friend say how the new offer equates with Houghton, and can he say something more about appraisal?

Mr. Baker: Condition No. 6 at Coventry dealt with appraisal. As I have said, we have made it clear that we want the 19 conditions agreed. Condition No. 6 says:

"contribute to and participate in formal performance appraisal and review, team planning, self-evaluation, in-service training and professional development in assigned areas of the curriculum, and pastoral arrangements."

I hope that appraisal will be introduced this year. As my hon. Friend may know, there is a proposal for certain pilot projects to be put in hand. That is an important advance and is contained in the Education Bill which recently left the House and is now in another place.

I thank my hon. Friend for welcoming this offer. Like me, he is anxious to seek to improve the career structure of teachers. That is the best way to improve the profession and its standing.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it not most unfortunate that for two years the Government have provoked the longest strike in the history of education and have now produced a statement delivered in the voice of diktat and threat about what will happen if teachers do not toe the line? The Minister is new to the job and has a lot to learn about it. For years teachers on pitiful wages have carried out voluntary duties. The Government now threaten that those duties will be made contractual and that teachers will be forced to carry them out. That will create again exactly the same conditions that gave rise to the trouble over the last two years. It is useless to say to the teachers that they will get no more. The Government have been dragged, kicking and screaming, from position to position, saying that teachers will get no more, but now they are to get more and the Government are boasting about it as if their action were voluntary.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman was once a head teacher. As a result of my proposals, head teachers will get rather more than Members of Parliament. In the hon. Gentleman's case, it may be a question of water finding its own level.

I refute the point that he made that the Government are in any way responsible for the breakdown of negotiations. I was appointed to this office in May and since that time I have been pressed every week, almost every day, to clarify the Government's position about teachers' pay. I have now done that and provided a framework which should lead to a settlement.

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): My right hon. Friend's clear and unequivocal statement will be welcomed not only by parents but by the vast majority of teachers. The statement is a result of a failure ever since the Houghton award to deliver what was contained in the last paragraph of Houghton—the teacher unions' willingness to deliver the professional teacher. This is not a case of the Government being dragged, screaming and protesting, up to date. The Minister of State served with me on the Burnham committee and knows that there has been this failure for a long time. This statement is long overdue.

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend—this is a special offer and a special settlement. It recognises the importance of the classroom teacher, who is the heart and essence of the education system. We must have a proper career structure so that teachers can see a way forward and be properly rewarded. The offer is a major step forward.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): In the suggested conditions, has any special consideration been given to the role of the primary school teacher, bearing in mind the recent recommendations from the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts about the achievement in primary schools? Has the Secretary of State and his Cabinet colleagues taken account of the likely effect of the offer on other employees in the public sector?

Mr. Baker: I agree that the recent report from the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts on primary education was important, and it dealt with wider matters than pay. In the promotion posts that I have announced, the first three levels will be available for primary school teachers—that is £900, £1,800, and £2,800. The resulting maximum salary scales for primary teachers, other than heads and deputies, will be £13,600, £14,500 and £15,500.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-upon-Avon): I welcome the Government's decision to abolish the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965. Will my right hon. Friend consider whether it would be better to move away from a centralised, national system of pay bargaining towards a decentralised system under which state-funded schools would be financially self-governing, negotiating contracts with teachers as their employees?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend raises a very wide and interesting question. I do not think that his suggestion will arise from the Nottingham meeting. However, he will know that I have made possible the arrangements he suggested for the city technology colleges. They will be independent trusts able to employ such teachers as they wish under the pay and conditions they wish to set.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Secretary of State take us a little further on the matter of the two lots of 8·5 per cent.? Is that the global total or is it the minimum which would apply to any teaching grade? If it is not the global total, what will be the minimum for each grade? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that imposing the condition of a completely new system of wage bargaining — presumably replacing the present pattern—will make his problems more difficult and not contribute to the welfare of children in the way that he wishes? He is imposing a third condition and, as far as I can gather, he has not made the terms of that clear. He is asking for a blank cheque.

Mr. Baker: I am not asking for a blank cheque. I have said that the Government are prepared to write a very substantial cheque provided that the conditions are met. I want to emphasise that point most strongly. This is a substantial increase in teachers' salaries and the equivalent amount of planned expenditure. It is justifiable only as a result of what we want to gain—which is a restructuring of the basic pay structure of the profession.

After looking at the Coventry proposals on pay and the long scale which went up automatically, I became convinced that that was not appropriate for the teaching profession, and many teachers agreed with me. Teachers on scales 3 and 4—senior teachers—have recognised that that is not the appropriate way to remunerate the profession.

Mr. Spearing: The right hon. Gentleman has not answered the question.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware of how much I welcome his constructive proposals and how much I think that they will do to restore morale in the teaching profession? Does he agree that schools should be stable institutions in the lives of our children, and that firm conditions of employment are one way to re-establish the trust between children and teachers which has been so sorely damaged during the past two years?

Mr. Baker: Like my hon. Friend, I deplore what has happened over the past 18 months, when teachers—who children should look up to, who have had the benefit of higher education and who have a responsible position in society—have walked out on their responsibilities and children have had to be sent home from schools. That is simply not acceptable. We believe that the 19 conditions should be reflected in contracts of employment, clearly setting out the duties and obligations of teachers so that they know their responsibilities and the head teacher knows what he can ask teachers to do.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): The tone of the Secretary of State's statement was as conciliatory as a shotgun marriage. If his proposals are not accepted at Nottingham, will he impose them unilaterally? Is he aware that the concern of teachers had as much to do with the lack of resources in education as it had to do with the pay structure? In creating a new contract, will he ensure that the resources meet the requirements of staff in the interests of our children?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman asked about the successful outcome of Nottingham, and I hope that there will be one. However, whether or not Nottingham achieves a negotiated settlement, I must re-emphasise that the Government's conditions will still have to be met if the extra money is to be paid. I am sure that the teachers want their extra money and I hope that the Nottingham negotiators will not stand in their way.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Does my right hon. Friend agree that parents will be astonished if teachers cannot find sufficient to requite their legitimate aspirations in this generous package? Can he confirm that the proposed machinery for settlements will have more chance of guarding against pay erosion as a result of the standards he has set?

Mr. Baker: In answer to my hon. Friend's last point, the proposals I shall bring before the House, for an interim advisory committee advising me upon pay, conditions and structure, will provide a better guarantee for teachers than the erosion they have suffered as a result of the breakdown of the Burnham machinery. There is wide agreement across the spectrum that the Burnham machinery is no longer useful.

I fully endorse and agree with my hon. Friend's first point. If, as a result of my statement, the teacher unions decide that they want more, are not prepared to accept the conditions, or they reject the structure and as a result disruption occurs in schools, that action should be universally condemned. The Government are prepared to provide substantial resources provided that we can find a long-term solution to the dispute.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Secretary of State appreciate that many parents will be bewildered and angry that the Government have done today what the right hon. Gentleman's unhappy predecessor said for so long was impossible? They have provided new money for teachers' salaries. Does he understand that with the take-it-or-leave-it attitude he has adopted today he has not created the best conditions for genuine negotiation? Does he mean that the money is available only if all 19 conditions are accepted? Is there any room for genuine negotiations? Further, will the maximum bill to fall on local government be 4 per cent.?

Mr. Baker: In response to the hon. Gentleman's point about the 19 conditions, the Coventry heads of agreement said:

"The basic contractual requirements of the jobs of teachers . . . should be defined in accordance with the ACAS report on duties and responsibilities."

I have not plucked the list of 19 duties out of the air. The hon. Gentleman will find the list in the Coventry report. He will also find greater reservations in that report. These provided the unions with a useful quarry for chipping away at Coventry. I insist that the 19 conditions are absolutely necessary.

What was the hon. Gentleman's other point?

Mr. Madden: The 4 per cent. limit.

Mr. Baker: Of course. The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the rates. The Government have provided new money, and we have provided for an increase in planned education expenditure. However, the increases that I have announced today will have to be met by the taxpayer and the ratepayer.

Mr. Madden: In what proportion?

Mr. Baker: I stated what local authorities could deduct from the block grant in my original statement. However, the rates will rise from between 2 per cent. and 4 per cent. more than they would have increased without the settlement.

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): I warmly welcome the terms of my right hon. Friend's statement. Does he accept that if parents are to be given the long-term reassurance that they seek the professional duties of teachers should be enshrined in statute?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend has raised an interesting point. I am anxious that the 19 conditions should be enshrined in the contracts of employment which lie between the local education authorities and the teachers. We would want to see the conditions implemented before any money was paid.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Is it not clear from today's statement that the Secretary of State looks upon the teachers less as members of a profession than as manual workers since he insists upon conditions and contracts of employment? Do the contracts of employment clearly state hours of employment, meal break allowances, whether teachers are to be paid for overtime or whether they will be given time off in lieu? Will the right hon. Gentleman say clearly what the position will be for local authorities which are subject to rate capping? Will there be a dispensation if they concede the increases?

Mr. Baker: The one local authority that could be in trouble this year is ILEA because it is not in receipt of

block grants. ILEA is the largest spending and most extravagant education authority in the country. I would expect any extra money that ILEA pays this year to be found from its own resources. As for next year, I shall have to look at ILEA's expenditure level.

The hon. Gentleman made a disparaging, unhelpful and demeaning remark about relating teachers to manual workers. That is exactly what I am not doing. In the proposals I am trying to enhance and improve the professional status of teachers.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: May I say to those hon. Members who rose to ask a question that there is a further statement and some Lords amendments to consider which will take us late into the night. I shall allow questions to continue for a further 10 minutes. I shall make a careful note of those hon. Members who are not called and seek to give them preference later.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Can my right hon. Friend assure me that to pay for the improved pay system the change in the rate support grant system takes account of the different education systems run by the various education authorities and the different numbers of children involved? Does he agree that both matters have a bearing on the number of teachers employed and the salaries that have to be paid?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right. He raises a wider point about the rate grant system, which many people believe to be less than satisfactory. I wish to make it clear that the block grant in respect of this expenditure will be paid to local education authorities through a supplementary report next year.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his statement today will be welcomed by my right hon. and hon. Friends, in spite of the pathetic attacks from the Opposition's empty Benches? Is it not a sign of the interest in education that the Government side of the Chamber is packed and the Opposition side almost empty? Will my right hon. Friend explain that the 8 per cent. increase that he has announced, with inflation at 3 per cent., is a very definite increase in teachers' pay, far greater than any increase granted by the Labour Government, when inflation was 20 per cent.?

Mr. Baker: The increase is substantial. I emphasise and reinforce my hon. Friend's remarks. The 8·2 per cent. from 1 January next year is on top of a 7·4 per cent. increase in teachers' salaries from 30 March this year. I can think of no group in the public sector that has had a settlement of that sort. The Government are prepared to contemplate such a settlement only because we hope to gain from it the restructuring of the teaching profession.

I agree that the Opposition Benches are thinly attended. I hope that the Opposition will not, because of their thinness, be tempted to support any disruptive action. The thinnest Benches of all are those occupied by the SDP. Until a moment ago there was no one there at all.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Will not the chances of a settlement at Nottingham be vastly increased if today's proposals are accepted by the Opposition? Will it not be regrettable if, for narrow party political reasons, the Opposition attempt to undermine the proposals?

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. Friend. The Opposition Front Bench and the leader of the Labour party have a responsibility. They have pressed me and my predecessor for a substantial commitment of Government funds to resolve the two-year dispute. I hope that they recognise the essential generosity of the offer. I hope that they will say publicly that they support what I have announced today.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his splendid package will mean that the public will totally reject any move by the teachers' unions not to go along with it? Does he agree that the teachers' unions must agree, because they will never achieve a better package?

Mr. Baker: Many teachers will welcome what I have said today. Many parents will look at the figures and reflect upon them. They will recognise that they have not had adjustments in their salaries or wage packets on this scale. They will recognise that the offer should be accepted.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the most welcome single element in his statement is the clear decision to bring together, at last, the pay and professional conditions of service for teachers? Does he agree that that is long overdue? Will my right hon. Friend confirm to the House and to those who are worried about the problems of public sector pay that he and the entire Cabinet are determined to stand firm? Does he agree that this proposal should not set a precedent for a repeat of the Clegg awards some years ago?

Mr. Baker: I reinforce that absolutely and totally. The Government are prepared to make the extra provision of Government funding only in very special circumstances, involving the restructuring of the whole pay system for the teaching profession and the establishment of proper contracts of agreement which tabulate, lay down and regulate duties and obligations. I want to emphasise that strongly. This is not the forerunner, and should not be considered to be the forerunner, of any other settlements in the public sector.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on proposing such reasonable, generous and conciliatory terms for teachers. Is it not a matter for regret that it took the quid pro quo of a much higher pay offer to encourage many teachers to fulfil their responsibilities for covering for other teachers, as many of them have in the past? However, will my right hon. Friend be somewhat cautious in going too far down a statutory path of imposing responsibilities on teachers because that might encourage a work-to-rule mentality which could be detrimental to young people's education?

Mr. Baker: Nottingham allows the teachers' unions and employers to come to an agreement which does not have to be imposed statutorily. I hope that they will take the opportunity to do that. Cover responsibilities are clearly laid out in my letter and are dealt with in the 1,300 hours provision. I do not need to remind the House of the recent court judgment that cover is an existing professional obligation for teachers. That is important.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Does he agree that the vexed problem of the shortage of science and maths teachers will not be fully addressed until teachers are paid, not only in accordance with their performance, but in accordance with the level of demand for their skills?

Mr. Baker: That is one of the reasons why the Coventry deal was so profoundly unhelpful. A scale which operated in a standard manner with automatic progression did not allow for sufficient promotion posts. The five promotion posts that I have recommended today in the pay structure will allow such problems to be dealt with. It is important to deal with it because there is a shortage in those important disciplines. The problem will be addressed in that way.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Was my right hon. Friend surprised by the hostile reaction to his statement from Labour Members? Will not parents find it unforgivable if the Labour party or its political friends in the trade unions make any attempt to sabotage such an imaginative basis for a settlement of this long-running dispute?

Mr. Baker: I think that the Opposition Front Bench is in a bit of a muddle over this, and does not quite know how to react. If, after reflecting on my statement, Labour Members take a concerted line condemning what I have said this afternoon, they will bear very great responsibility for any disruption in our schools.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I welcome this new and most generous pay structure. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that 400,000 teachers, many of whom are Labour party members, will benefit from the genuine career and promotion prospects? Is it not irresponsible of Labour and Liberal Members to deny their support when parents have had enough, and expect their children to be properly taught, without any unrest?

Mr. Baker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support, and I endorse what he has said. Parents and families will have high expectations of a settlement in Nottingham and of peace in our schools. We must return to what was always considered to be the natural basis of education in Britain, which means uninterrupted education for the benefit of our children.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that after his imaginative statement there will be even less justification than there ever was for the unballoted industrial action proposed for next week by NAS/UWT? Will he write to that union pointing out the advantages, following his statement, of calling off action before it is too late?

Mr. Baker: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I deplore the action threatened next week, the disruption of half days and the picketing that will take place. It is totally unnecessary, and can only harm education. Moreover, it will severely damage the reputation of those teachers and unions that support it.

Mr. Radice: I welcome the fact that the Government are providing more money but I repeat: if it is available now, why was it not available two years ago? I must ask the Secretary of State again, because he did not answer before, why he said nothing about the Coventry proposals on reducing the size of classes, giving time to the preparation of lessons and providing more opportunities for in-service training? The right hon. Gentleman did not answer that question before. Will he answer it now?

The Secretary of State seemed rather annoyed about my warnings over the nature and tone of his intervention. I asked him to state whether the Government would be prepared to give more money. They have done that, but I do not accept the way that it has been done. At this last moment, is not the Secretary of State asking teachers to keep faith with the contract side of the bargain while at the same time telling employers to tear up the agreement on pay structure that was so carefully negotiated at Coventry and that was specifically designed to reward the classroom teacher?

Finally, is the Secretary of State aware that we are desperately anxious that Nottingham should succeed? For the past two years we have tried to obtain a settlement of the teachers' dispute, and if the Nottingham negotiations fail, it will be the Government's fault.

Mr. Baker: I do not think so. In my statement I mentioned 195 working days and set out the figure that was discussed at Coventry. I understand that the 1,300 hours also featured until very late in the marathon negotiating session in Coventry. Those are very important figures because they deal with class time. It works out at an average of 33½ hours for the 39 teaching weeks of the year.

Apparently, the hon. Gentleman now wishes to support Coventry, but he knows perfectly well that ever since that agreement was negotiated unions have chipped away at it. There has been considerable disquiet about it, and it was condemned and strongly attacked in the Main committee. It does not provide a proper basis for the structure of the teaching profession. When the hon. Gentleman has read the letter that I have placed in the Vote Office, and has reflected on it, I hope that his support for what I have said today will be unequivocal.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Although questions from Labour Members completely dried up towards the end of this vital statement on education, is it not the convention that the Opposition spokesman should use his second intervention to raise new points, and not just reiterate points because he made them so badly the first time?

Mr. Speaker: That may be, but I am not responsible for what is said.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It quite often happens that there are general questions affecting England on which there is a statement. That is then followed by a statement involving Scotland. Quite often only a proportion of English Members of Parliament are called. Would it not be appropriate if a similar proportion of Scottish Members were called, as otherwise it might appear that English Members are second-class citizens. I think not of myself but of the general issue.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot give any such guarantee. I am genuinely sorry about what has happened. It would be ideal if I could call every hon. Member who wished to speak on a statement, but that is patently not possible. I do my best to make amends later when these matters are discussed. I keep very careful records.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Scotland)

4.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about school teachers' pay and conditions of service in Scotland.

On 6 March this year I told the House that I intended to set up a committee of inquiry to examine the pay, conditions of service, and management of school teachers in Scotland. The committee was asked to report by the end of the summer. I received the report towards the end of September and it was published on 2 October. I congratulate Sir Peter Main and his colleagues on the speed and thoroughness with which they have discharged a very difficult and important task.

At the core of the committee's report is a set of recommendations which the committee has suggested should be judged as an indivisible package. These relate to pay level and structure, the duties and conditions of service of teachers, staffing standards and negotiating machinery. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that, in general, the Government accept the asterisked recommendations as a package. I shall make the necessary resource provision, backed by additional rate support grant, to allow local authorities to implement in full the salary scales proposed in the report so as to settle teachers' pay for 1986-87 and 1987-88. This will be done on the following time scale—half the further increases recommended by Main will be paid from 1 January 1987, making an average increase of 8·2 per cent. from that date on top of the 5·5 per cent. interim increase paid from 1 April 1986, and the remaining half will be paid from 1 October 1987. Both stages would depend on the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee reaching agreement on a settlement which provides for the full implementation of the asterisked recommendations on pay structure, duties and conditions of service. I must emphasise that my offer is entirely dependent on reaching such agreement, in that it cannot be increased and there can be no question of any part of these resources being made available other than on this basis. The size of the award and the burden that it imposes on the ratepayer and the taxpayer make it sensible to stage implementation, as has been done in the past with other awards of this kind.

My proposals would involve adding £14 million in 1986-87 and £60 million in 1987-88 to planned expenditure on education; this reflects the cost over and above the figures that I have already announced as the basis for rate support grant in 1987-88. Grant will be increased in those two periods by £8 million and £30 million respectively. That would represent a big pay increase for Scottish teachers; it is justified only by the benefits which the package as a whole will bring—the right kind of pay structure for Scottish schools, the necessary clarification of teachers' duties, which parents will find particularly helpful, and a more practical and realistic approach to teachers' conditions of service. In accepting these recommendations, the Government are making clear the importance that they attach to securing the future development of the education service and recognising the contribution that teachers make to our society.

There is one asterisked recommendation on which I will for the time being reserve the Government's position—the recommendation that an independent review body be established to settle the pay and conditions of school teachers. That recommendation has major implications for the future and I wish to give it further thought before reaching a final conclusion on it.

I have concentrated in this statement on the asterisked recommendations which lie at the core of the Main committee's report. There are, of course, many other valuable recommendations—on the role and functions of head teachers, on the professional development of teachers, on the role of parents and on the more effective and economical use of resources within the school system. I intend to pursue all these matters vigorously in consultation with the education authorities and the other interests concerned.

Since August 1984 Scottish schools have suffered disruption as a result of the present teachers' dispute. The Main committee's report offers us an excellent basis not only to end that dispute but to offer our schools and teachers a positive way forward. This is a once and for all opportunity which must be seized with both hands. The Government are prepared to do their part even though the cost to the ratepayer and taxpayer is high; now it is up to the teachers and the employers to do theirs. Meanwhile, I call upon the teachers' unions to call off their continuing boycotts of certain duties and to allow schools to function normally; the immediate resumption of normal working must, of course, be a feature of the agreement that I am asking the SJNC to reach. I am sure that the whole House will join with me in urging teachers and employers to reach speedy and full agreement along the lines I have indicated.

5 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): By any standards, this is a serious statement which is central to the possibility of settling a long-running, unhappy dispute, and we should be dismayed indeed if the Government were to put at risk, or worse still beyond reach, a just and honourable settlement.

The Minister says that the Government have accepted Main "in general". He will accept that that is an important qualification. He must agree that the report is presented as an indivisible package, an approach which the Government have urged upon teachers. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that he is taking a considerable risk in departing from the report's central recommendations on pay? Does he accept that, over this financial year and the next, his re-jigging of the financial timetable proposed in Main will have a significant impact on individual teachers and what they can expect? Does he accept my calculation that the new phasing would cost a teacher about 10 per cent. of his present salary during that period?

The newly proposed settlement involves the loss of 16·4 per cent. for three months from 1 October 1986 to 1 January 1987 with a further 8·2 per cent. in the nine months from 1 January 1987 to 1 October 1987.

I have not had a great deal of time to calculate the figures, but will the Secretary of State confirm that a teacher on a present salary of £8,000 can expect over the period from October 1986 to October 1987 to get about £800 less than he would have got if the Government had held to the Main timetable? The right hon. and learned Gentleman will recall that the Main committee put the cost of its recommendations on pay for the year 1987-88 at £144 million. What will the figure be for the revised package now before the House? I accept that the

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

Government have found a considerable sum, but is it right or prudent to depart from Main in this way? It is certainly a risk.

I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman to consider whether it would be wise to discuss phasing with the local authorities—the employers who, after all, have to bear a large proportion of the burden of any settlement. Will he confirm that the whole cost of any settlement will be eligible for rate support grant funding and that no authority will suffer penalties because it has spent above the guidelines simply as a result of any settlement that might be reached? In other words, will the guidelines be adopted to take full account of any increase in expenditure following from the teachers' pay settlement?

The Secretary of State will recall the important recommendation in Main, marked with an asterisk, calling for a radical review of overall staffing levels. Is he willing to tackle this matter positively? Teachers will want to know his attitude before they reach their decision.

Can the Secretary of State confirm that these revised proposals will be subject to the agreement of the SJNC —the agreement of the employers and employees? Will he assure the House that if, unfortunately, agreement is not reached on an acceptable package, there is no possibility of legislation to impose the conditions? Will he kill that fear stone dead? Will he make it clear that Main's rejection of that option is a rejection that he unreservedly supports? The Secretary of State's reservations are more than minor presentational changes. It would do no one any favours if those changes were hidden. The Secretary of State's reservations must be assessed by all interested parties. Our fervent hope is that this departure from Main will not fatally undermine the chances for a settlement. The Government have shown a measure of flexibility, to put it kindly, by departing from the central recommendations on pay in the Main report. I trust that they will not now take an unyielding, inflexible stand in the continuing search for a solution.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for recognising that the teachers will be expected to make grave decisions in the weeks to come. It is important that they respond to the present situation in a measured way. The Scottish public — parents, and children — will expect the teachers to respond in a way which will allow our schools to function properly.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of detailed points to which I shall respond. First, he asked me to give an assurance that local authorities would not suffer penalties as a consequence of any increased expenditure arising out of this settlement. I can confirm that that is so. Local authority funding provision will be increased to ensure that authorities will not suffer penalties.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that phasing should be subject to discussion as it is a new measure which I have announced today. The hon. Gentleman is quite right that this proposal has expenditure implications for local authorities. He will be the first to appreciate that local authorities will be saving resources as a result of phasing, so there will not be any marked additional expense.

The central question which the hon. Gentleman raised is whether it is reasonable that a major increase of 16·4 per cent. should be phased. The hon. Gentleman and the House will be aware that, over the last few years, there have been numerous precedents with regard to phasing settlements in the public sector. The examples range from nurses, doctors, the police, the armed forces and dentists. Such groups have accepted phasing, especially when a settlement has been above the rate of inflation. It is right to make a reasonable recognition of the importance of ensuring reasonable levels of pay settlement in the country and in the public sector. I believe that reasonable people, including teachers, will accept that the proposed phasing is responsible and sensible.

I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that the phasing we are proposing will mean that half of the amount recommended will be paid from 1 January and the other half nine months later. That means that teachers will, during the course of 1986-87, have an increase in their pay, including the interim award agreed some months ago of almost 14 per cent., of a further 8·2 per cent., which will be given in the second stage. By any standards this is a generous proposal to the Scottish teaching profession.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his response to the Main report. Does he accept that the provision of a 16·4 per cent. increase over a year and a 36 per cent. increase over three years is a triumph for the Government? Everyone in Scotland will expect the teachers to welcome this response with enthusiasm and to return to work as soon as possible and without any further argument. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this decision proves that Tories care about education and are prepared to back that commitment with money?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for the welcome that he has given to this proposal. The emphasis of the Main recommendations and the Government's response is concerned not simply with pay but with the duties and responsibilities of teachers. I strongly believe — I trust that the public share my belief—that it is in the interests of the teaching profession that these matters should be considered as a single package, and that is what we have done.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Does the Secretary of State accept that it must now be recognised that it was a fundamental mistake by the Government to wait for 19 wasting and damaging months before establishing an independent pay review? I associate myself with the congratulations given to Sir Peter Main.

Is the right hon and learned Gentleman aware that the alliance regret the fact that the Secretary of State has been unable to reach a conclusion about an ongoing pay review as recommended in paragraph 58 of the Main report? It is not a new idea and I am surprised that the Secretary of State should suggest that it is. My hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and I argued it many times with the previous Secretary of State. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that we are angry and unhappy at the way in which he has departed from Main on pay? It is still not clear, from his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), precisely what is the financial loss which emerges from this. However, it is incontestable that there is a loss. Surely it is unreasonable for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to depart from the indivisible package of the Main report and simultaneously require the full implementation from the

profession. Surely the right hon. and learned Gentleman would agree that that is a dangerous strategy and could well carry the serious risk of teacher rejection.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the unions and local authorities have differing views on the question of an independent pay review. I believe that the announcement I have made today, that we wish to give further thought to the matter, will be widely welcomed. I listened to the hon. Gentleman's remarks on phasing with some interest because I did not hear his hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) raise any objection to phasing of the award proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. If the Liberal party believes that it is reasonable and in the public interest for a major increase of 16·4 per cent. to be phased in the way proposed in England and Wales, I await with some curiosity to hear why it should be considered irresponsible north of the border.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his statement will be warmly welcomed by parents throughout Scotland and by all reasonable teachers? Against a background where, on my calculations, the average pay increase for Scottish teachers will be 30 per cent. over the three years to next October, will it not be regarded by parents as incomprehensible if disruption should now continue in Scottish schools?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right. On the basis of what I have announced today, more than 66 per cent. of teachers in Scotland, over two thirds, will be earning over £12,000 a year and nearly one third of teachers in secondary education will be earning more than £15,000 a year. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] By 1 October 1987. That is less than a year from now. That is in the context of an increase of 16·4 per cent. on top of the 5·5 per cent. they have already been awarded this year, which was on top of the 9 per cent. awarded last year. That will mean that over two to three years teachers in Scotland will be seeing an increase in their salary of almost 30 per cent. My hon. Friend is right in saying that parents and the public in Scotland would be astonished if there was any suggestion of disruption in the schools as a consequence of an offer of that kind.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Secretary of State aware that many of us felt that the Main report provided an excellent basis for a settlement for teachers' salaries and conditions in Scotland, preventing further disruption in schools? However, it is extremely misleading for the Secretary of State to say that he has accepted the asterisked recommendations as a package when the salary increase date of 1 October 1986 was a key recommendation in the report.

Is it not a fact that the phasing, far from being minor, will save about 10 per cent. of the annual salary bill over the next 18 months and therefore reduce teachers' expectations, as compared with Main, by about 10 per cent. of their annual salary? Is it also not a fact that if further disruption does unfortunately occur in Scottish education the Secretary of State will bear a major share of the responsibility for that, just as it was the Government's earlier intransigent attitude over the setting up of the independent pay review that caused so much hardship to Scottish education?

Mr. Rifkind: I will do the right hon. Gentleman the credit of saying that I do not think he believes in what he is saying. I genuinely express the view that the right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that an award of 16·4 per cent. to teachers, with a nine-month gap between the two phases, is an extremely generous offer to teachers. He knows that the public, including his constituents, would be delighted if they were to receive such an increase. He also knows that there is ample precedent throughout the public sector for phasing of the kind I have proposed. If nurses, doctors, the armed forces and the police are able to accept phasing of that kind, I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman believes that it is unreasonable to expect teachers also to accept it.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I add my congratulations to the Secretary of State for the speedy response he has made to the Main report, which has obviously had far-reaching implications over the Scottish border. Would he care to emphasise the ring fence approach to the pay award and the fact that this does not constitute a signal that there can be a free-for-all for pay increases in the public sector?

Mr. Rifkind: That is the case. The pay that has been proposed, which is generous, is properly tied to the agreement by the teaching profession in Scotland to the conditions and to other aspects of the non-pay package as recommended.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I congratulate the Secretary of State on making a statement today as requested by John Pollock and the national executive of the Educational Institute of Scotland before the special general meeting of the EIS on 8 November and the subsequent ballot of EIS members. Those members will now be able to decide on the facts without being in the political vacuum that would have existed had the statement not been made.

If the Secretary of State is prepared to negotiate on the anomalies in the salary scales proposed by Main in the salaries committee, is he also prepared to negotiate on conditions of service within the conditions of service committee, which is unique to Scotland and has no counterpart in England or Wales, in order to allow the Scottish teachers to look at the conditions of service, or have the teachers to accept or reject the statement today as a package?

Mr. Rifkind: It would have to be the latter. It is clear that the 16·4 per cent. pay increase is quite properly tied to the other proposals in the report. There may be other matters in the report which are not given the same importance and which may be subject to discussion of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for the early part of his question in which he made the fair point that it is reasonable that teachers, when they consider their response, should be aware of the fact that the Government are prepared to fund the report and that we are prepared to devote substantial new resources to it and ensure that local authorities are able to cope with it without any increase in penalties. The hon. Gentleman's contribution, like that of the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, recognised the important matter we are dealing with and the fundamental consequences for parents and education in Scotland if this offer does not lead to a resolution of this difficult problem.

Mr. John Corrie (Cunninghame, North): I also warmly congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the

[Mr. John Corrie]

statement. I assure him that parents throughout Scotland will be delighted. May we now expect that an agreement will have to be reached by 1 January, or will talks go on beyond that date and the backdating of pay take place if an agreement has not been reached?

Mr. Rifkind: As long as an agreement has been reached at some stage on the basis that has been proposed, that agreement will be backdated to 1 January.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Why does it need the imminence of a general election to loosen the public purse strings? Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an assurance that this package, even if accepted, will lead to the diminution of the drain of science teachers to industry?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman raises two points. First, his timescale about elections is somewhat misplaced. The Government's response arises from the Main inquiry, which was announced nine months ago. We could not respond to the Main inquiry until it had reported, which it did at the beginning of October. Therefore, by all normal criteria, we responded pretty quickly. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will respond to that in his usual generous way.

On the question of science teachers and others of that kind, one of the crucial ingredients of the package proposed by Main and accepted by the Government is that, for the first time for several years, teachers who acquire real responsibility in their schools are being offered substantial salaries. For example, a headmaster in one of Scotland's largest secondary schools will be able to expect to receive a salary of about £28,000 per year. At lower levels, salaries are substantially greater than teachers have been able to expect in recent years. If we are anxious to attract people of real ability to the teaching profession, we now have a far better means of doing so than we have had for some time.

Mr. Alexander Pollock (Moray): Bearing in mind that it was my right hon. and learned Friend who set up the Main committee to try to find a solution to this long-running and unhappy dispute, and mindful of the maxim that he who wills the end must will the means, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that nothing could be worse than a grudging response from the Government at this stage? Therefore, will he assure the House that, irrespective of the forthcoming autumn statement and other matters of concern to the Treasury, the money is firmly up front and remains on the table, subject only to the teachers having the good sense to accept this package and return to normal working in the classroom?

Mr. Rifkind: I can confirm that. However, if the proposals were to be rejected, there is no way that one penny of additional resources would be made available. That is clearly the view, not just of the Government but of local authorities. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has said that it is not interested in a pay settlement which deals with pay alone. The Government and Scottish local authorities speak with a single voice on this.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Is it not the case that the Secretary of State lost the battle in Cabinet and is unwilling to deliver the pay proposals in the Main report? Does he remember saying to the Scottish public, through the medium of the press, that he regarded the Main report as a distinctive entity which should be delivered? Is he not jeopardising our children's education by gambling in that fashion?

Mr. Rifkind: For the hon. Gentleman to suggest that the announcement today of a 16·4 per cent. pay increase for teachers represents—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is not."] I am sorry, it does represent a 16·4 per cent. increase for school teachers. Whether phased or not, it is an increase, similar in nature to phased increases for other groups in the public sector. For the hon. Gentleman to suggest that that represents anything other than an excellent offer for the teaching profession in Scotland is extraordinary and misguided.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that many parents who have suffered the effects of the disruption will view these increases as fabulous? As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out, the increases amount to about 30 per cent. Is it not remarkable that few Opposition Members will go back to their constituencies and urge teachers to accept it? How can they possibly go back to their constituencies and expect to be treated as though they have been behaving responsibly if their only response to this settlement is to carp and to whine as they have done today?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right. It is an extremely generous settlement. The estimated average salary of a teacher in primary education will be £12,300 and it will be £13,745 for a secondary school teacher. If one compares that to the salary levels of two years ago, there will be few people among the general public who will see this as anything other than an extremely generous proposal.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): Many of us recognise that it could not have been easy for the Secretary of State for Scotland and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to screw this settlement out of the Treasury. Nevertheless, I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the whole ethos of the Main report gave full recognition to all the problems which have been confronted by Scottish teachers over the past two years and, while not justifying the disruption, could understand it. I appeal to the Secretary of State to take a less aggressive approach, and not to threaten the teachers that if they do not accept this in total there will be no money at all on the table.

Mr. Rifkind: It is a curious threat to offer a 16·4 per cent. pay increase. As the hon. Gentleman's introductory comments recognised, the offer involves a substantial increase in demand on public resources. He is correct to say that phasing was not recommended by the Main report, but he will be one of the first to appreciate that the Government have a responsibility not only for the teaching profession, but to try to ensure that public sector pay negotiations generally, as well as other matters which affect the wider economy, are taken into account.

It is not unreasonable to say that a massive increase such as this should be phased over a short period, just as it would be for others in the public sector. The Government propose 8·2 per cent. from 1 January and the other 8·2 per cent. nine months later. That is not an absurd degree of phasing extending over two, three or four years.

It will ensure that the full award recommended by the Main report will be available to all Scottish teachers within a short period. The vast majority of teachers will accept that that is not unreasonable given the situation affecting the wider community.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I associate myself with the initial comments of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) that the remarks of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State this afternoon will give considerable satisfaction to John Pollock and his executive in the Educational Institute of Scotland. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is deplorable that some members of the EIS, and other unions in Scotland, have decided to condemn the Main report before Mr. Pollock and his executive have had a chance to consider it in a responsible manner as they have done since the Main report was published?

Mr. Rifkind: It is regrettable that some individuals believe that they should receive massive pay increases and not accept their responsibility to respond to the other matters recommended by the Main report. I am sure that that is not the view of the vast majority of Scottish teachers, who know that most of the non-pay recommendations with regard to a new contract represent what they currently do in normal circumstances — for example, curriculum development, the presentation of pupils for examinations, and the various other duties suggested by the Main report. None of those will impose a new burden on the teaching profession. I was interested to learn that some leading members of the EIS had been seeking to explain that to their fellow members during the last few days. I hope that they are successful in their effort.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Given that the asterisked comments in the Main report will have serious consequences for the teachers, does the Secretary of State think that it is more likely that teachers would feel inclined to accept the conditions from their employers rather than having a gun put to their heads by the Secretary of State before they had had a chance to discuss them with their employers?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government are providing not a gun but money, which ultimately must be paid by the taxpayer, and, through the local authorities, by the ratepayer. The EIS and others have been anxious to hear the Government's view. They have said that they wish to know whether the Government would be prepared to fund the consequences of the Main report's recommendations. I have confirmed today that we shall be able to do just that. That should now lead to a speedy response from the teachers and full endorsement of the proposals put forward.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I assure my right hon. and learned Friend that his announcement will be warmly welcomed by my constituents who will join me in congratulating him and his ministerial colleagues on their sustained efforts to promote peace and stability in Scottish schools. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the public and the parents, who will finance this deal, are entitled to expect that the leaders of the teaching profession will make a positive response when they meet next week and recommend their members to accept the proposals set out in the Main report, and return to normal working conditions as soon as possible? Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell me what the position is about the disregard for local authorities in respect of the 5·5 per cent. interim award paid for the current year?

Mr. Rifkind: I have not commented on my hon. Friend's final point, but I am able to confirm that there will be a disregard with regard to the consequences of the 5·5 per cent. interim award announced earlier this year. Therefore, no local authority will attract penalties as a consequence of that earlier award.

Parents and the public would find any further disruptions in the schools incomprehensible. I think that it would be fair to say that the House would also find it incomprehensible. Whatever reservations hon. Members may have about phasing, few would wish to argue for a return to disruption by teachers in Scotland.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State bow a little to the reality of what is happening in the schools? When the Main report was issued its starred recommendations were treated as an indivisible package and the Main proposals on salaries were immediately circulated in the schools. I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will accept that he has moved away from those recommendations and, whether he supplies the figures or not, what will now be circulated in the schools will be the moves, which he thinks are small but which we think are substantial, from the Main recommendations.

We are all concerned about the atmosphere in the schools and, by moving away from Main in his statement today, no matter how little, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is conditioning an atmosphere against the Main proposals. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) sits muttering on the Front Bench, but he knows nothing about it. I speak as the husband of a teacher and the father of a teacher.

I challenge the Secretary of State to publish the difference between what he is proposing and Main. Does he accept starred proposal No. 8 because that has implications for the management of the school and the position of the head teacher?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, we accept the recommendations for head teachers, which seem to be sensible. If the hon. Gentleman is the husband of a teacher who is likely to receive a 16·4 per cent. increase over the next few months, he should have responded in slightly more cheerful tones than he seems to feel capable of. If the hon. Gentleman asks his constituents whether it is reasonable or unreasonable to phase a 16·4 per cent. pay increase over a period of months, I think that he will find that few of them would not like to be in the position of being offered such a pay increase. The hon. Gentleman should take that into account.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. and learned Friend modestly accept the claim that it is due to his sensitive, sophisticated and almost singular initiative that this intractable dispute was solved at all, and solved not only for Scotland but for England? Will he remind the House that the teaching profession refused to negotiate on conditions of service and that for them now to say that they object to the phasing of the pay claim and to try to put in the dark the far more important

[Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn]

review of conditions of service and teaching would be a betrayal of the initiative with which he has served the teaching profession, the parents and the children so well?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for his remarks. I genuinely believe that the vast majority of people in Scotland will see the Government's response as an extremely generous one, guaranteeing, as it will, the implementation of a major pay increase, and, indeed, expecting from teachers no more that what the vast majority of good teachers already do in normal circumstances. That is the context in which it should be judged.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The Main committee costed its pay package at £90 million in 1986-87 and £144 million in 1987-88. As a result of the Secretary of State's tampering with the phasing of the funding, how much will it cost in those financial years? Will the Secretary of State rule out legislation?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should recall that the Main committee's estimate of the cost included the 5·5 per cent. interim award that was announced earlier this year and that reduces the cost of Main from £144 million to £113 million. In addition to that, there is the 3·75 per cent. increase in the budget which the Government allowed for in determining the rate support grant for next year which reduces the cost of £144 million to £87 million. In addition, there are the resources that I announced in my statement earlier. It is only by taking all those factors into account that a proper comparison can be made.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): One of the worst things that can happen to a child in Scotland, as in the rest of the kingdom, during its education is that it should fall under the tutorship of one of the small minority of bad teachers. What action is my right hon. and learned Friend taking within the package to ensure that we can get rid of bad teachers?

Mr. Rifkind: There is no specific proposal within the package, but the Main report said that it had come to the conclusion that the present complicated procedures that are required to be fulfilled before a bad teacher can be dismissed need to be modernised so that the rules governing teachers should be closer to those governing all other employees. That requires further consultation and consideration and does not form part of the specific package announced today.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Secretary of State concede that, in the critical days ahead when the Scottish teachers deliberate and ballot on the report in the context of his response on behalf of the Scottish Office, trust is essential? The right hon. and learned Gentleman has taken an enormous political gamble in saying that the package remains indivisible in relation to the full implementation of an agreement and conditions while seeking to divide that package with the phasing of the pay award.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman finish the critical sentence in his reply to the question from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) when he came to the inbuilt costs or losses associated with his announcement on phasing today? He could not have made that statement unless the Scottish Office had done the costings. What is the net loss?

Mr. Rifkind: I said in my original statement that the added provision for 1987-88 is £60 million. I cannot give the exact figure immediately, but one would have to incorporate that in the figures that I announced earlier to work out the difference between what Main announced and the figures that I have given. As I mentioned earlier, the cost that Main announced of £144 million comes down to £113 million because of the interim award and down to £87 million because of the provision that we have already made in the rate support grant. I shall have to check, but it would appear that, given the £60 million that I have announced today for 1987-88, there will be a difference of £27 million for 1987-88.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Does the Secretary of State recall that when he first set up the so-called independent inquiry earlier this year some of us had our doubts about how much an inquiry could be truly independent if its findings were to be subject to the financial straitjacket of Government economic policy? Now that our fears have been realised by the Secretary of State's deplorable failure to deliver the salary timescale recommended by Main and Main's statement that his report is an indivisible package, does the Secretary of State realise that the only honourable course open to him is to go back to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and tell them to come up with a fairer deal for Scottish teachers? Otherwise, there will be a real risk of a continuing crisis in Scottish education for which the Secretary of State must bear full responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should not get carried away with that sort of hyperbole. He knows perfectly well that a 16·4 per cent. pay increase, half paid in January and the other half nine months later, is a superb offer for teachers. He knows perfectly well that he would be acting in a grossly irresponsible way if he sought to suggest that any reasonable person would reject such an offer. I know that the hon. Gentleman finds it difficult to be responsible, but he should try occasionally.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Secretary of State come clean with the House and with the teaching profession by stating clearly how much has been saved by postponing the first phase of the pay increase from October to January and by phasing the rest of it?

Will the Secretary of State also explain to the House and to the teaching profession, the members of which must consider their monthly salary in contrast to the enthusiasm that we have heard from Conservative Members, why the Cabinet accepted the Treasury recommendation as against the Main recommendations, themselves considerably diluted? Why has the Secretary of State underestimated the intelligence of the teaching profession and of parents?

Finally, why should teachers have faith in the Secretary of State when he refuses to accept the central recommendation of ensuring that there is an independent pay review body to deal with these matters?

Mr. Rifkind: The teaching profession should have faith in what I have said because, as a result of the Main inquiry which I set up earlier this year, teachers are now being offered a 16·4 per cent. pay increase. If that is not a major step towards ensuring peace in schools, it is difficult to imagine what would be.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) questioned why the first phase of the pay increase will be paid on 1 January. The Government and the Main report make it clear that such a high pay increase can be justified only by a return to normality within schools. It is equally true that, at this time, there is no normality in schools. There is no curriculum development or parental liaison and in many areas of school life teachers have declined to behave normally. Even if the result of the ballot is what we hope—in favour of the resolution of this issue—it is unlikely that the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee will ratify this agreement much before the middle of December. Therefore, it is reasonable that, if the proposals are approved and ratified, the increase should date from 1 January 1987.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Secretary of State has not answered the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). As with all negotiations involving terms and conditions of employment, concessions must be made by employers and employees. However, if the teachers have an answerable case, as Main has said, for pay increases now, why are the Government not implementing the award from 1 October, as Main recommended?

Mr. Rifkind: I have just answered the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and explained why 1 January is a far more relevant date, given that there is no normality in the schools and that there will not be until the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee ratifies the award.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I understand that the Secretary of State has said two things this afternoon. First, the difference between the Secretary of State's proposals and the Main proposals is approximately £27 million. He is sacrificing the indivisible Main package for £27 million. Secondly, can he confirm that his statement will mean that, during the next 12 months, Scottish teachers will suffer a 10 per cent. loss compared with what they would have received had Main's proposals been implemented?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should realise—I believe that he does—as his colleague the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) realises——

Mr. Kirkwood: It is irrelevant.

Mr. Rifkind: No, it is not irrelevant. It would be gravely irresponsible, at a time when inflation is as low as it is, for any Government to implement a pay increase of 16·4 per cent. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) must realise, as some other hon. Members certainly do, that since in earlier pay settlements phasing has been a natural part of the process, the modest phasing that is proposed here is acceptable. It is not just a matter of £27 million, although the hon. Gentleman is correct to say that that is the sum involved over the year in question. It is also important to ensure that teachers are not considered as living on the moon, separate from other people engaged in wage negotiations.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire can have no interest in an escalation of wage claims. That is why, in many previous cases in the public sector and elsewhere, when a major pay increase has been considered reasonable and responsible, most responsible people have accepted that a phasing of the increase is not unreasonable.

Mr. Marlow: On a point order, Mr. Speaker. This is further to the point of order that I raised previously. I believe that it is a substantial point of order.

We had a statement on education in England, which lasted for about 46 minutes. Various English Members of Parliament were not called. I make no complaint about that because I got my question in anyhow on the Scottish statement. We had questions on the Scottish statement for 49 minutes. If we take a minute out of that for myself, that leaves 48 minutes. That is two thirds of a minute for every Scottish Member and less than a tenth of a minute for every English Member. It seems that the Scottish Members get a better crack of the whip than the English Members.

Speaking as an English Member, and knowing that you are an Englishman, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether in future weeks and months some consideration could be given to the matter so that some of my English colleagues — not myself, because I know the problem that faces you — do not consider themselves as second-class Members.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think it will help.

Mr. Wilson: If Scottish statements were taken first and were followed by English statements, Scottish Members would be very pleased.

Mr. Speaker: May I say to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that I allowed 50 minutes, which is by any standards a long time for a statement, on the first statement and rather less for the Scottish statement. The hon. Member can do his arithmetic. It would be absolutely marvellous from the point of view of the Chair if I could satisfy every hon. Member every day. Unhappily, that is not within my power. I simply try to be as fair as I can.

Orders of the Day

Financial Services Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

INVESTMENTS AND INVESTMENT BUSINESS

Lords amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 1, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

"(2) In this Act "investment business" means the business of engaging in one or more of the activities which fall within the paragraphs in Part II of that Schedule and are not excluded by Part III of that Schedule.".

5.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 2, in page 2, line 8, after "business" insert "maintained by him"

No. 3, in page 2, line 9, leave out paragraph *(b)* and insert—

"*(b)* engages in the United Kingdom in one or more of the activities which fall within the paragraphs in Part II of that Schedule and are not excluded by Part III or IV of that Schedule and his doing so constitutes the carrying on by him of a business in the United Kingdom."

No. 32, in clause 30, page 19, line 27, after "business" insert "maintained by him".

Mr. Howard: As this is the first group of amendments to be discussed, and especially as it is the first group of several which deal with the scope of the Bill, it might be appropriate if I made some general comments before coming to the substance of the amendments under consideration.

Many amendments have been made to the Bill. I wish that it had been possible to keep the number rather smaller, although I must immediately add that many of the amendments are technical. However, the number and variety of amendments fulfil a promise we have made throughout the proceedings on the Bill that we would listen carefully and with an open mind to representations put to us and would not hesitate to introduce amendments where a case was made out.

The Bill is highly technical and it ventures into previously uncharted legislative territory. We would have been severely criticised, and justly so, if in those circumstances we had not listened to representations.

I would not wish my introduction to suggest that the Bill is, or is intended to become, fundamentally different from the Bill that was introduced 10 months ago. The basic regulatory structure remains unchanged because we believe that it is the right structure. But the Bill has benefited from extensive consultation on detailed structure and on technical points.

We have received several representations about the scope of clause 1. The anxiety that has been expressed about the definition in clause 1 was that a person engaging in some business wholly unconnected with investments might be regarded as carrying on investment business, and hence be required to be authorised, by virtue of entering into a single investment transaction. That would clearly be absurd. As it happens, it would not be the result of the clause as originally drafted. But on such a matter, it is clearly important that there should be as little room for doubt as possible.

Amendment No. 1, therefore, makes it clear that a person who engages in investment activities from a permanent place of business in the United Kingdom will be regarded as carrying on investment business in the United Kingdom only if his investment activities taken on their own, in isolation from any other activities and from any activities excluded by virtue of part III of schedule 1, could be regarded as amounting to carrying on business.

Amendment No. 3 makes it clear that a person who does not carry on investment activities from a permanent place of business in the United Kingdom will be regarded as carrying on investment business here only if he engages in the United Kingdom in one or more investment activities which are not excluded by parts III or IV of schedule 1 and, in so doing, may be regarded as carrying on a business in the United Kingdom. These amendments will, I believe, remove any remaining doubts about the effect of the clause.

Amendments Nos. 2 and 32 make it clear that the references to a "permanent place of business" in clause 1(3)*(a)* and clause 30(2) refer to a permanent place of business maintained by the person in question. Without this clarification it might be argued that an overseas person who engaged an agent established in the United Kingdom to enter into investment transactions for him could be regarded as entering into those transactions from a permanent place of business in the United Kingdom. This would mean that the exclusions in part IV of schedule 1 would not apply, although the arrangement I have described is one which they were designed to cover. Once again, it seems preferable to put the matter beyond doubt by the amendments.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I am grateful to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for his general comments. As this is the first group of amendments, I shall follow suit. We are confronted with a most unusual position. We have before us a list covering 581 Lords amendments, comprising 136 printed pages. It is fair to say, as the Minister has, that many of the amendments are of a technical and consequential nature and that others arise because of commitments given in earlier proceedings. However, the fact remains that we have great difficulty, not only because of the sheer volume of the amendments, but because of the timing.

The Lords completed their procedures only earlier this week. The simple exigencies of printing, and so on, have meant that we have seen the amendments in their marshalled form for only 24 hours at the maximum. Although the Minister is well able to handle the volume of material, since, one assumes, he has had a hand in preparing it, a great burden is placed on other hon. Members. I immediately pay tribute to the efforts that the Minister and his private office have made over the past months to try to keep the Opposition Front Bench in touch with what has been going on. That has been helpful.

However, I think of other Government and Opposition hon. Members who will find it an almost superhuman task to try to winnow out from this immense volume of material what is important and what is not. It is all very

well for the Minister to say that the amendments are merely technical, but if the Opposition—I include all Opposition parties—are to do their job properly, they cannot take that on trust. We must look at the amendments to ensure that they are technical and consequential and that there are not points of political significance buried in them. It must be said that the Government have confronted the House with an extremely difficult proceeding.

In my view, the Government are not entirely to blame, although, as the prime mover in such matters and responsible for the consultations and preparations for the Bill, they must take the ultimate responsibility. However, I think that the Minister has been unfortunate—if I may offer him a word of comfort—in that he has been the victim of some remarkably late lobbying on the part of City interests and institutions which have belatedly woken up to the fact that some of the Bill's provisions will cut across some of their well-established interests. No doubt the Minister has found that some people have been banging hard on his door over recent weeks, and perhaps that is part of the reason we are confronted with so many late amendments. We cannot let the point pass without registering that protest—that we are confronted with that difficulty and, as a consequence, we are unable to give the Bill the detailed scrutiny that it should have. It is an important measure, and I fear that we must take a great deal on trust.

I was interested to hear the Minister's comments on the substance of the amendments. I shall ask him a straightforward question. Many of the amendments to the definition clauses of the Bill have arisen because of representations made by bodies such as the Association of Corporate Treasurers and the Confederation of British Industry. They became alarmed that the Bill as originally drafted would drag into its net a range of activities that were not intended to be covered. Opposition Members are familiar with some of those arguments.

From time to time, the Minister and his governmental colleagues have said that great reliance can be placed on the word "engaged", and that the phrase "engaging in business" implies a connotation of continuity; in other words, it does not apply to a one-off transaction and, therefore, many of the problems that were feared might arise are thereby dealt with. Sometimes, it was argued that the word "engaged" implied the doing of business for remuneration. I ask the Minister whether he is satisfied that such reliance can be placed on the term. Can he give us a general assurance that the proper concerns raised by the corporate treasurers and others have been largely met? I am not aware that there is any residual difficulty about the matter, but I think that it is worth placing on the record the fact—if indeed it is a fact—that the basic objections and difficulties have been met.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I shall comment briefly on the general points that have been made. First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on his election to the shadow Cabinet. On behalf of the Labour party, he has carried the Bill almost single-handedly, and his performance has been most impressive. Perhaps that has something to do with his elevation. As to the points made about the way in which the matter has been dealt with—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I thought that it made sense to allow the Minister to make an explanation. Equally, it made sense for the Opposition Front Bench spokesman to respond. However, I think it inappropriate to embark on what would, in effect, be a further Third Reading debate. The House should address itself to the amendments.

Mr. Smith: That is a bit tough on Back Benchers, is it not, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that I should never have allowed any general comment in the first place. That is a criticism that he must not apply to me. The House must address itself to the amendments.

Mr. Smith: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The amendment illustrates the dilemma in which my hon. and learned Friend the Minister found himself. He said that when he received representations on the matter he was not satisifed that there was any need to amend the Bill. He felt that clause 1 made it clear that what was intended was reference to sombody who was running an investment business on a regular basis. He thought that it was quite clear that it was not referring to a one-off investment transaction. However, he wanted to put the matter beyond doubt and to satisfy those who were concerned.

I think that many of the amendments are to do with the periphery, the boundaries of the Bill, the definition of "investment business", and whether certain people are or are not caught by the Bill. Amendment No. 1 illustrates the difficulty in which my hon. and learned Friend found himself. That is true of many of the amendments. He has said that, although the Government have put down amendments and they have been accepted in another place, amendment No. 1 is not strictly necessary.

Mr. Howard: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) for his remarks. I associate myself with the congratulations he offered to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on his election yesterday to the shadow Cabinet. I am also happy to associate myself with the remarks made by my hon. Friend about the part played by the hon. Gentleman during the consideration of the Bill in this House. Certainly it owes a good deal to his constructive contribution. I acknowledge the protests that he registered and the way in which he did so. I hope that we can make progress this evening, and if necessary tomorrow, to deal with the issues involved.

The answer to the specific question that the hon. Gentleman raised was largely provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield. We took the view that the word "engaged" had the connotation suggested by the hon. Member for Dagenham. For that reason, the meaning which was attributed to clause 1 by those who were concerned about its application was not justified, and they were being unduly apprehensive. On the other hand, it seemed that one had a duty to respond to those concerns, to place the matter beyond doubt and to deal with it in the way in which we have sought to do by bringing the amendment before the House. I am happy to tell the House that we have met the concerns that were expressed rather late in the day by the CBI and the Association of Corporate Treasurers. There is no lingering unhappiness on their part, at least so far as I am aware, about the concerns they expressed to us at the end of July.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 2

POWER TO EXTEND OR RESTRICT SCOPE OF ACT

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 2, line 21, at end insert "or the carrying on of such business in the United Kingdom.

( ) The amendments that may be made for the purposes of subsection (1)*(b)* above include conferring powers on the Secretary of State, whether by extending or modifying any provision of that Schedule which confers such powers or by adding further such provisions.".

6 pm

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 24, after "business" insert

"or the carrying on of such business in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Howard: The most important change made by amendment No. 4 relates to the scope of the powers in clause 2. The need for an amendment springs from an amendment which introduces into schedule 1 a procedure for the Secretary of State to grant permissions which will have the effect of excluding from the definition of investment business certain activities carried on by the holder. The existing power in clause 2 to amend the definition of investment or investment business would not have been sufficient to amend the powers of the Secretary of State to grant permissions under the new provisions or to confer further powers on him. Therefore, it would not have been possible to extend the powers to cover activities other than those specified in the amendment, or to amend the criteria against which applications are to be judged. The amendment gives the clause 2 powers this desirable flexibility. Amendment No. 5 and the first part of the amendment No. 4 are consequential on amendments to the definitions in clause 1 made on Report.

Mr. Gould: I understand from what the Minister has said that the general effect of amendment No. 4 is to give the Secretary of State greater flexibility to adjust the definition of what carrying on investment business might or might not mean. One could add to the definition or subtract from it. That is a welcome flexibility, and I accept the purpose of the amendment. I take this opportunity to examine the direction in which the Secretary of State might intend to use his powers. An obvious and important way in which he might use these powers is by incorporating as part of the investment business, which ought to be dealt with under the Bill, the advising and managing of takeover bids. Most people understand that this is an important aspect of City operations and of investment business generally.

Given the unfortunate fact that the City very often finds itself in the headlines these days as a consequence of public concern at the way in which takeover bids are managed, it seems perverse that so far the Government have not taken the opportunity of specifically including the rules of the takeover code and the role of the takeover panel within these definitions. The fortunate aspect of this amendment is that it at least keeps open the possibility that the Secretary of State will choose to use his powers to do what the Opposition believe he should do, and ought to have done from the outset.

The sheer volume of takeover activity has caused a great deal of concern, but there is even more concern about the obvious evidence that corners are being cut and rules are being bent simply because of the immensely valuable business available to merchant bankers and others in this lucrative market. Increasingly, one finds — there is evidence virtually every day of the week—that the City and the takeover panel are concerned at the way in which the rules are ignored. It is perverse that the Government do not take the opportunity to remedy that obvious difficulty. A current example with which we are all familiar involves the problems arising from the Turner and Newall bid for AE. It could be argued that the takeover panel acted very fairly and responded with the appropriate range of sanctions and penalties. I shall try to argue in a moment that that is not necessarily the best way of dealing with that situation.

The difficulty, of course, is that the panel as presently constituted and operating, and operating outside the Bill and outside any possible statutory framework, remains a voluntary body. As a consequence, its rules have no legal force, it has no sanctions, and at the end of the day it has no teeth. In the intensely competitive new City, the major new players, as we all know, are intent on playing to the rules—to the whistle—and will demand something more than the relative lack of certainty offered by a voluntary code. Already there is evidence that in major takeover bids of this sort people are increasingly tempted to go to court, and on occasions do so, to get a legally binding ruling as to what is permissible and what is not. The danger is that if things are left as they are, quite apart from any other problems, the takeover panel may find itself bypassed in many of these important matters.

The case for the takeover panel in the present situation is that it provides a system of flexibility and of speedy response. I do not dispute that. My criticism is not of the fulfilment of the takeover panel's role within the constraints placed upon it. It has done an excellent job. If these matters are to be regulated effectively and if public and City concern is to be damped down, it is important that, in addition to speed and flexibility, and perhaps in contradistinction to those qualities, the takeover code should offer certainty. Grey areas are no longer good enough. We need the certainty of black letter law, as it were, so that everybody knows where he stands.

Mr. Howard: In the Turner and Newall case, the panel said that anybody in doubt about the meaning of the code, instead of consulting his lawyers — we all know that one's lawyer will often give the advice one is looking for —should consult the panel and get a legal ruling.

Mr. Gould: I am not sure whether the Parliamentary Under-Secretary's reply meets my point. I do not dispute for a moment the willingness of the panel to answer such questions. The problem is that the answers that the panel gives are no more legally binding than anything else it does. It is increasingly clear that some parties to bids are likely to want a legally binding decision from the courts.

The Turner and Newall case — the AE case — illustrates the difficult point that concern about the role of the takeover panel and the case for bringing it within the framework of the Bill rests on two attitudes which, in some

senses at any rate, run in contrary directions. There is the problem that, without sanctions, the takeover panel is increasingly in danger of being ignored. It will be ignored, if we are not careful, by those whose reputations are of no great value to them. The sanction at the disposal of the takeover panel is that of public reprimand. The panel could use the sanction of public reprimand to hurt people who transgress the rules. Damage is caused to the reputation of the bank or house involved. If, however—this is not by any means beyond the bounds of possibility—we are dealing with people who, in a sense, have no reputation to protect and are content to take the money and run, the sanction is of much less significance.

Without some statutory back-up to the code—some legal force to the sanctions which it can apply—I fear that, in the intensely competitive climate in the City, it will become simply part of the acceptable wounds of battle, or some of the occupational hazards which merchant banks and others are content to accept as the price for carrying out this business and for obtaining future business. There is evidence in recent cases that even reputable merchant banks and reputable brokers are willing to take that public reprimand — that slap across the wrist. As a consequence, they can show their present and future clients that they are in to play rough for the best possible result for their clients.

The danger is that over a period the sanctions, such as they are, which the takeover panel might be able to exert will simply lose their force. We saw in the case of Lloyd's what happens when a regulatory system becomes inured to unacceptable behaviour. I fear that the same may happen with the takeover code and the activities of the panel. That is the primary case for the Minister using the power that the amendment gives him to extend the ambit of the Bill to the takeover panel.

In relation to the AE case, let me explain the other set of concerns. I think that this is the point that was made by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). Even where the panel appears to take tough action, and appears to apply the rules in a penal way, there is still a substantial ground for concern at the fact that the panel has no statutory powers. The difficulty arises because if the panel gets tough, it does so on the basis of no legally established powers of any sort. It is not a tribunal, and it is not a court of law. It does not and cannot therefore provide the legal safeguards. It provides little by way of proper appeals, and so on. If major decisions are to be taken, affecting hundreds if not thousands of millions of pounds, they should be taken by a body that is set up by law and therefore provides all the ordinary safeguards that should be provided.

The difficulty with the AE case is that the takeover panel in many ways fell short of some of the procedural safeguards. It left some of the parties dissatisfied. In the end the sanctions that it applied were applied to the company rather than to the advisers. It was the shareholders of the victim company, as it were, who, in the end, had to carry the burden of the bad practices of their merchant banks and stockbrokers. In other words, even where the takeover panel has done what it can to punish transgressors, it has ended up punishing the wrong people. Even in areas where it tries to improve the operation of the code—for example, in the restrictions on advertising—it is in danger of misunderstanding what is needed in the interests of investor protection. For many shareholders, the full-page advertisement in one of the quality dailies is a useful and almost unique source of information about the nature of various bids. Even in its constitution, the takeover panel is hardly representative of the investing public, but it is certainly representative of many of those who manage investments and deal with takeover bids. It is unfortunate that in its attempts to regulate the area, it has acted against the interests of small investors.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Interesting as the hon. Gentleman's submissions are, which he has made at length, what is their exact relevance to the amendment? We want to reach many important provisions at a reasonable hour, and we may not do so.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is yielding to his familiar temptation to usurp the functions of the Chair. I can assure him that I am as anxious as anyone to make progress with the Bill. As I am about to conclude my remarks, I shall bear his strictures with equanimity.

I urge the Minister to reply along the lines that he is sensitive to the issue that I raise. I hope that he recognises the need for improvement by legislative intervention in that area, and that he will use the powers that the amendment provides to extend the Bill to that vital area.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I fear that if I were to add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on his election to the shadow Cabinet I might do his chances next year some damage, as so much admiration has already been expressed by Conservative Members.

I rise merely to comment on the burden of the hon. Gentleman's speech. He said that he found the amendment sensible and one that he could normally support but was probing the Minister as to what was in his mind. From the hon. Gentleman's speech, I got the impression that if the Minister could not assure him about the takeover panel and its ultimate inclusion in the Bill, the hon. Gentleman might push the matter to a Division. I have to say with no enthusiasm, and perhaps, to put it bluntly, with a little embarrassment, that if he were to do that my party and I could not go into the Division Lobby with him. I say that with a little embarrassment because we joined him in the Division Lobby last time he raised the matter. Therefore, I ask him and others to recognise that, on maturer consideration of those matters and, in particular— *[Interruption.]* Labour Members have good reason to laugh, but Conservative Members have not. They will recall that the Government introduced some 700 amendments, 20 new clauses and four new schedules and the Minister has had to refer time and again to "mature consideration". I recall that when we discussed the immunity of self-regulating organisations he argued for half a morning that there should be no immunity for SROs but subsequently gave in—not to the blandishments of good sense, but to the pressure put upon him by City organisations and others.

6.15 pm

If the Minister can make such claims, so can I. I shall try to explain why we have reached that view. I refer first to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) — that the takeover panel is currently working well. One does not need to take his view or, indeed, my view on that. The most cursory study of the speech by the hon. Member for Dagenham when he raised the matter on Report will

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

reveal, at column 539, a tribute to the working of the panel. The debate in the other place was redolent with statements by the Labour spokesman there about how the takeover panel was working effectively. I direct the attention of the House to column 518 of the *Official Report, House of Lords*, of 27 October, in which the official spokesman for the Labour party said that he believed that the panel was working well and that the code in operation was good. I do not quote him precisely, but any cursory study of the debate gives that sense. The Labour spokesman did not criticise the working of the panel in any way or suggest that it was inimical to the shareholders.

There was a good deal of contradiction between the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham about the working of the takeover panel and the statements by his party's representative in the other place, where the Labour spokesman went so far as to say specifically that he believed that the takeover panel in its operation and under the present rules looked after the interests of the small shareholder. That is precisely the point on which the hon. Member for Dagenham has taken a different view, so perhaps there are differences in other areas as well. In short, there was no suggestion in any of the those speeches that the takeover panel was not operating successfully and looking after the needs of small shareholders — for instance, in a way that ensures that they receive offers in the same way as larger shareholders. Indeed, one criticism of the takeover panel has been that in some quarters it makes it too easy for small shareholders to receive such bids. I am assured, however, that the hon. Member for Dagenham would not wish to alter that provision—and nor would I.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): What we should like to hear is not criticism of what my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, but the Liberal view. Is the Liberal party happy that the takeover panel has no teeth? That is what we want to know.

Mr. Ashdown: I was moving to that point. It seems that the Labour Front Bench in the other place, and, by inference, here as well, agrees that the takeover panel is operating well at present. The view is shared by them and us that the current operation of the takeover panel is adequate. The hon. Member for Dagenham has not criticised that.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman has made the statement so frequently that even I, with my great patience, am forced to rise to contradict him. I have just spent eight or 10 minutes explaining carefully, as I thought, precisely why Labour Members—I am glad to associate my hon. Friends in the other place with the sentiments that I have expressed — believe that the takeover panel, although an admirable body within the constraints that apply to it, is not doing an adequate job in the interests of investor protection. I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman did not take that meaning from what I said.

Mr. Ashdown: I take the flavour of that, but it seems that there is a contradiction to be drawn between what has been said this evening and what was said on Report. The hon. Member for Dagenham said:

"It is appropriate to pay tribute to the work of the takeover code and of the panel that administers it."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1986; Vol. 99, c.539.]

He then said that the serious question was whether that arrangement would suffice following the big bang.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): If the hon. Gentleman believes that there will be different problems after the big bang, is he saying that he agrees with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), or is he trying to explain why there are apparently no Liberal Members present to support him this evening?

Mr. Ashdown: If this issue is pressed to a Division, the hon. Gentleman will find that members of my party will be present to support me. There is no difference between the hon. Member for Dagenham and myself about the takeover panel perhaps being in need of some amendment in future. The question is whether the best way of doing that is to bring it within the Securities and Investments Board.

I am left in some slight confusion. When this matter was debated in another place an Opposition Front Bench spokesman made it clear that, although it was suggested that the panel should be subject to statutory rules, that did not include an intention to bring it under the SIB. That is contrary to what the hon. Member for Dagenham has said.

We accept that the takeover panel is working adequately, leaving aside whether that will continue to be the position after the big bang, so is it appropriate to bring the panel under the SIB now in readiness for changes that might have to be made in the future? The SIB is clearly overloaded and it is doubtful whether, with its current resources and with the challenges that it is now facing, it is capable of taking on even more responsibility as suggested by the hon. Member for Dagenham and whether it could carry out the job in an appropriate manner is even more doubtful. There are some defects in the statutory approach that has been suggested, and the hon. Member for Dagenham fairly and honestly named some of them. Would a statutory code governing the panel slow down the essential speed of operation that is so important and to which the hon. Gentleman alluded? Would a statutory code be too inflexible to meet the panel's needs in a way that hon. Members on both sides of the House would like to see? The present arrangement gives some flexibility in operating the rules for the panel, which can be beneficial. There is no reliance on statute and the courts.

I support the view that was advanced cogently in a previous debate by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher). He made some trenchant criticisms of the panel but said that he felt that the SIB had enough on its plate already. If that was true on 12 June, it must be immeasurably more true now with the pressures that have since been placed on the SIB. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central was right to call for an independent re-examination of the panel. The Minister did not concede that there was a need for that to be done, but I hope that he will give the suggestion further thought. I believe that it would be a useful way forward.

If we place the panel within the SIB, whose job it is to direct itself purely to City matters, will we limit the ambit of a panel which from time to time may have to address broader considerations affecting the public interest which may not be exclusive to the City? We know that the SIB is interested particularly in investor protection and those who invest in the City, and is there not some evidence to show that the panel's considerations will extend beyond

investor protection to the broader public interest? I accept that the panel may well have to be examined in future, but it is operating very well now and it is not necessary to change it now. Indeed, it is necessary not to change it until it becomes necessary to do so.

Mr. Hoyle: A typical Liberal.

Mr. Ashdown: It is typical that Liberals are prepared to consider these issues in the light of the circumstances that prevail at the time and to make a judgment of what is appropiate. I share with the hon. Member for Dagenham some doubts about whether the panel, as constructed, will meet the needs of the City and will be able to carry out the job that it is called upon to perform in the new context in which it will find itself, but I do not think it necessary to solve the problem by immediately placing the panel on a statutory basis or placing it within the SIB. It is probably better to take a longer view of the problem and to arrange for an independent re-examination to take place.

When that process has been completed, we can take the most sensible course that will meet the needs of the City. We shall be able to take a much more measured and sensible approach as a result of taking a longer view of the problem. That would be infinitely preferable to placing the panel within the SIB now.

Mr. Howard: I hope that the House will forgive me if I resist the temptation to enter into a fascinating analysis of whether, and if so to what extent, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was criticising the takeover panel and, if so, whether he was being consistent or inconsistent with what he said previously, or with what was said from the Opposition Front Bench in another place, and to what extent that view accorded or did not accord with the views expressed by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). Even more tempting is the philosophy behind the question posed by the hon. Member for Yeovil in his closing remarks. I think that he was saying, "To change or not to change, that is the question"—subject on which he and his party are unrivalled in their expertise.

The peg on which the hon. Member for Dagenham sought to hang his intervention, with characteristic ingenuity, was the extent to which the activities of advising and managing bids and takeovers come or would come within the scope of the amendments. It is that point, which is cardinal and perhaps the only point relevant to the debate, that I propose to address, but I fear that I am unable to offer the hon. Gentleman much comfort.

A professional adviser who advises a person on the acquisition of shares is already covered by the definition of "investment business". So, too, is a merchant bank which makes arrangements for the acquisition. I think that that much will have been appreciated by the hon. Gentleman, and I have no doubt that it is common ground between us. Clause 2 could not be used to bring the panel's rules, which apply to acquirers as well as to advisers, into the scope of the Bill. It is concerned with the activities and people caught by the Bill, not with the Secretary of State's rule-making vires. Even if I were persuaded by the hon. Gentleman's blandishments that the powers which are the basis of the amendment could be used to cover the activities to which he has referred, the scope to do so does not exist within the terms of the amendments, so it would not be possible to do what has been suggested.

Tributes have been paid by hon. Members on both sides of the House—I do not wish to re-enter the argument about the precise tone of the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham — to the panel's activities. I wish to associate myself with the tributes and compliments that have been paid because I believe that the panel is working well. I see no ground for criticising its rulings in the case of Turner and Newall and AE.

Without wishing in any sense to be provocative, it seemed that at one stage the hon. Member for Dagenham was seeking to criticise the panel for not being able sufficiently to enforce its rulings. At another stage, he seemed to be suggesting that it was enforcing its rulings too stringently and too effectively. I detected a certain inconsistency there. I suggest that the panel is working well, that there are no grounds for interfering with its workings, that there would be no advantage in bringing its activities within the scope of the Bill and that, in any event, it would not be possible to do so within the scope of the amendments.

6.30 pm

Mr. Gould: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who made a valiant effort to hide his embarrassment at the fact that he and his party have from one stage of the Bill to another almost totally reversed their stance. He tried to cover that up by paying great textual attention to what my noble Friends said. All I can offer the House is the thought that, on that subject at least, I can act as a more authoritative interpreter of their remarks than the hon. Member for Yeovil.

There is no difference between my noble Friends and me on this. We believe that the takeover panel has done a good job within the constraints put on it in its role as a voluntary body. We also believe that, in the light of the immense changes that are taking place in the City, that ought to change. We are asking not, as the hon. Member for Yeovil would have it, for the takeover panel to be brought immediately within the aegis of the SIB — although that might have been a desirable possibility at an earlier stage of the Bill—but that the Secretary of State should exercise some form of reserve power.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he has changed his mind about bringing the takeover panel within the aegis of the SIB? If he has changed his mind, perhaps he will be honest enough to say so.

Mr. Gould: I have made it clear that I have not changed my mind. I am simply adjusting to new circumstances at a different stage of the Bill. Unlike the Liberal party, we have not done a complete volte face. We might well have settled this issue in another place if alliance peers had joined the otherwise cross-bench alliance in support of my present argument.

What the Minister said came as no surprise to me. I understand the technical point that he made but, to reach a speedy conclusion to the debate, I shall content myself with saying that his speech was imbued with a complacency that is not shared by a wide range of opinion outside the House, not least in the City. A good deal of press comment and City opinion is now convinced that we can no longer live with the present arrangements. The Opposition want to register that point strongly. I have no real quarrel with that amendment, but to register our view on the Government's refusal to take the takeover point seriously we shall be compelled to divide the House.

[Mr. Gould]

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 133.

Division No. 303] **[6.33 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Critchley, Julian
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Moore, Rt Hon John
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Portillo, Michael
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*

Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
John, Brynmor
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Nellist, David
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Laurence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Lords amendment No. 5 agreed to.

Clause 5

AGREEMENTS MADE BY OR THROUGH UNAUTHORISED PERSONS

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 3, line 19, leave out "investment agreement" and insert "agreement to which this subsection applies".

6.45 pm

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

No. 7, in page 3, line 34, leave out "interest on any such money" and insert "compensation for any loss sustained by him as a result of having parted with it."

No. 8, in page 3, line 36, leave out "interest" and insert "compensation".

No. 9, in page 3, line 42, leave out from beginning to end of line 13 on page 4 and insert—

(a) in a case within paragraph *(a)* of that subsection, that the person mentioned in that paragraph reasonably believed that his entering into the agreement did not constitute a contravention of section 3 above;

(b) in a case within paragraph *(b)* of that subsection, that the person mentioned in sub-paragraph (i) of that paragraph did not know that the agreement was entered into as mentioned in sub-paragraph (ii) of that paragraph; and

(c) in either case, that is just and equitable for the agreement to be enforced or, as the case may be, for the money or property paid or transferred under it to be retained."

No. 10, in page 4, line 28, leave out from "(7)" to "constitutes" in line 29 and insert "Subsection (1) above applies to any agreement the making or performance of which by the person seeking to enforce it or from whom money or other property is recoverable under this section".

No. 11, in page 4, line 31, at end insert "and is not excluded by Part III or IV of that Schedule."

No. 76, in clause 51, page 37, line 3, leave out "interest on any such money" and insert "compensation for any loss sustained by him as a result of having parted with it."

No. 86, in page 39, line 20, leave out "interest on any such money" and insert "compensation for any loss sustained by him as a result of having parted with it."

No. 77, in page 37, line 4, leave out "interest" and insert "compensation".

No. 85, in clause 52, page 39, line 8, leave out "interest on any such money" and insert "compensation for any loss sustained by him as a result of having parted with it."

No. 87, in page 39, line 22, leave out "interest" and insert "compensation".

No. 202, in clause 112, page 90, line 35, leave out "interest on any such money" and insert "compensation for any loss sustained by him as a result of having parted with it."

No. 203, in page 90, line 36, leave out "interest" and insert "compensation".

No. 204, in clause 113, page 91, line 40, leave out "an investment agreement" and insert "an agreement to which section 5(1) above applies".

No. 205, in page 91, line 45, leave out "interest on any such money" and insert "compensation for any loss sustained by him as a result of having parted with it."

No. 206, in page 92, line 1, leave out "interest" and insert "compensation".

No. 207, in page 92, line 10, leave out from "1982" to end of line 24 and insert

"; and

(b) that it is just and equitable for the contract to be enforced or, as the case may be, for the money or property paid or transferred under it to be retained."

Mr. Howard: These amendments reflect debates, both here and in another place. They concern what happens where an unenforceable investment agreement is entered into. An investor who enters into such an agreement shall be entitled, not simply to interest on money handed over but to such compensation as a court may determine or the parties agree. So, if an investor who hands over shares under such an agreement loses out on a rights or bonus issue, this can be taken into account in determining the level of compensation.

These amendments also enable a court to allow an otherwise unenforceable investment agreement to be enforced, if it considers this to be just and equitable in the circumstances of the case. The court will have to be satisfied that a person who entered into the agreement in the course of carrying on investment business in

[Mr. Howard]

contravention of clause 3 reasonably believed that his entering into the agreement did not breach the requirements of clause 3. If the agreement was with an authorised person but in consequence of the involvement of an unauthorised person, then the court will have to be satisfied that the authorised person did not know of the unauthorised person's involvement.

These amendments will substantially reduce the risk of a person, in a sector other than investment business, inadvertently crossing the boundary line and finding his contracts to be held unenforceable. The criminal and negligent will continue to have this sanction applied.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 6

INJUNCTIONS AND RESTITUTION ORDERS

Lords amendments made: No. 12, in page 4, line 39, leave out "or, in Scotland, an interdict".

No. 13, in page 4, line 40, at end insert

"or, in Scotland, and interdict prohibiting the contravention".—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 10

GRANT AND REFUSAL OF RECOGNITION

Lords amendment made: No. 14, in page 7, line 37, at end insert

" or an exempted person in respect of that business."—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 13

ALTERATION OF RULES FOR PROTECTION OF INVESTORS

Lords amendment made: No. 15 in page 10, line 5, leave out "and" and insert "or".

No. 16, in page 10, line 13, at end insert

"or an exempted person in respect of that business".—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 15

AUTHORISATION BY MEMBERSHIP OF RECOGNISED PROFESSIONAL BODY

Lords amendment: No. 17, leave out clause 15.

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 18, leave out clause 16.

No. 19, after clause 16, insert the following new Clause—

"PERSONS AUTHORISED BY RECOGNISED PROFESSIONAL BODIES

Authorisation by certification by recognised professional body.

.—(1) A person holding a certificate issued for the purposes of this Part of this Act by a recognised professional body is an authorised person.

(2) Such a certificate may be issued by a recognised professional body to an individual, a body corporate, a partnership or an unincorporated association.

(3) A certificate issued to a partnership—

(a) shall be issued in the partnership name; and

(b) shall authorise the carrying on of investment business in that name by the partnership to which the certificate is issued, by any partnership which succeeds to that business or by any person who succeeds to that business having previously carried it on in partnership;

and, in relation to a certificate issued to a partnership constituted under the law of England and Wales or Northern Ireland or the law of any other country or territory under which a partnership is not a legal person, references in this Act to the person who holds the certificate or is certified shall be construed as references to the persons or person for the time being authorised by the certificate to carry on investment business as mentioned in paragraph *(b)* above."

No. 20, after clause 16, insert the following new clause—

"*Professional bodies*—

.—(1) In this Act a "professional body" means a body which regulates the practice of a profession and references to the practice of a profession do not include references to carrying on a business consisting wholly or mainly of investment business.

(2) In this Act references to the members of a professional body are references to individuals who, whether or not members of the body, are entitled to practise the profession in question and, in practising it, are subject to the rules of that body.

(3) In this Act references to the rules of a professional body are references to the rules (whether or not laid down by the body itself) which the body has power to enforce in relation to the practice of the profession in question and the carrying on of investment business by persons practising that profession or which relate to the grant, suspension or withdrawal of certificates under section *(Authorisation by certification by recognised professional body)* above, the admission and expulsion of members or otherwise to the constitution of the body.

(4) In this Act references to guidance issued by a professional body are references to guidance issued or any recommendation made by it to all or any class of its members or persons seeking to become members, or to persons or any class of persons who are or are seeking to be certified by the body, and which would, if it were a rule, fall within subsection (3) above."

No. 21, in clause 18, page 12, line 39, leave out from "that" to end of line 18 on page 13 and insert

"the requirements of subsection (2A) below and of Schedule *(Requirements for recognition of professional body)* to this Act are satisfied as respects that body.

(2A) The body must have rules which impose acceptable limits on the kinds of investment business which may be carried on by persons certified by it and the circumstances in which they may carry on such business and which preclude a person certified by that body from carrying on any investment business outside those limits unless he is an authorised person otherwise than by virtue of the certification or an exempted person in respect of that business."

No. 22, in clause 19, page 13, line 27, leave out "any of the requirements of subsection (2) of that section are" and insert

"section 18(2A) above or any requirement of Schedule *(Requirements for recognition of professional body)* to this Act."

No. 23, after clause 19, insert the following new clause—

"*Compliance orders*—

.—(1) If at any time it appears to the Secretary of State—

(a) that subsection (2A) of section 18 above or any requirement of Schedule *(Requirements for recognition of professional body)* to this Act is not satisfied in the case of a recognised professional body; or

(b) that such a body has failed to comply with any obligation to which it is subject by virtue of this Act.

he may, instead of revoking the recognition order under section 19 above, make an application to the court under this section.

(2) If on any such application the court decides that subsection (2A) of section 18 above or the requirement in question is not satisfied or, as the case may be, that the body has failed to comply with the obligation in question it may order the body to take such steps as the court directs for securing that that subsection or requirement is satisfied or that that obligation is complied with.

(3) The jurisdiction conferred by this section shall be exercisable by the High Court and the Court of Session."

No. 24, in clause 20, page 13, line 36, leave out subsections (1) to (3) and insert—

"(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring a recognised professional body to give him forthwith notice of the occurrence of such events relating to the body, its members or persons certified by it as are specified in the regulations and such information in respect of those events as is so specified.

(2) The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring a recognised professional body to furnish him at such times or in respect of such periods as are specified in the regulations with such information relating to the body, its members and persons certified by it as is so specified.

(3) The notices and information required to be given or furnished under the foregoing provisions of this section shall be such as the Secretary of State may reasonably require for the exercise of his functions under this Act.

(3A) Regulations under the foregoing provisions of this section may require information to be given in a specified form and to be verified in a specified manner.

(3B) Any notice or information required to be given or furnished under the foregoing provisions of this section shall be given in writing or in such other manner as the Secretary of State may approve."

No. 25, in page 14, line 14, after "but" insert "*(a)*".

No. 26, in page 14, line 18, at end insert

"; and

(b) notice need not be given in respect of any rule or guidance, or rules or guidance of any description, in the case of which the Secretary of State has waived compliance with this subsection by notice in writing to the body concerned;

and any such waiver may be varied or revoked by a further notice in writing.".

No. 27, in page 14, line 19, after "of" insert ", or of regulations under,"

No. 60, in clause 45, page 30, line 45, after "or" insert "persons certified by a".

No. 67, in clause 48, page 33, line 36, after "or" insert "a person certified by a".

No. 68, in clause 49, page 34, line 26, after "or" insert "a person certified by a".

No. 72, in clause 50, page 36, line 3, after "or" insert "a person certified by a".

No. 73, in page 36, line 16, leave out from third "of" to "to" in line 18 and insert

"a recognised self-regulating organisation or a person certified by a recognised professional body".

No. 78, in clause 51, page 38, line 2, after "or" insert "a person certified by a".

No. 106, in clause 57, page 45, line 20, after "or" insert "a person certified by a".

No. 107, in page 45, line 24, leave out

"a member of such an organisation or body"

and insert

"such a member or so certified".

No. 116, in clause 59, page 46, line 29, after "or" insert "a person certified by a".

No. 129, in clause 66, page 49, line 6, after "substitution" insert "*(a)*".

No. 130, in page 49, line 7, leave out "or recognised professional body".

No. 131, in page 49, line 10, at end insert

"; and

(b) for the reference to the rules of a recognised professional body of a reference to any prohibition or requirement imposed in the exercise of powers for such purposes by that body or by any other body or person having functions in respect of the enforcement of the recognised professional body's rules relating to the carrying on of investment business".

No. 166, in clause 82, page 63, line 10, after "or" insert "certification by a ".

No. 170, in clause 89, page 68, line 18, leave out "other than section 15".

No. 171, in page 68, line 26, leave out paragraph *(f)*.

No. 172, in page 68, line 35, leave out from first "organisation" to end of line 37 and insert

"or certification by a recognised professional body, the name and address of the organisation or body;".

No. 173, in page 69, line 5, leave out "15 or".

No. 175, in page 69, line 40, at end insert "or".

No. 176, in page 69, line 43, leave out from "effect" to end of line on page 70.

No.177, in clause 92, page 71, line 28, after "or" insert "a person certified by a".

No. 185, in clause 96, page 76, line 10, after "1" insert "and paragraphs 4, 4A and 7E of Schedule 13".

No. 304, in clause 141, page 110, line 4, after "or" insert "certification by a".

No. 317, in clause 148, page 115, line 40, after "or" insert "certification by a".

No. 320, in page 116, line 20, after "or" insert "certification by a".

No. 321, in page 116, line 29, after first "or" insert "certification by a".

No. 336, in clause 153, page 123, line 40 after "or" insert "certification by a".

No. 338, in clause 154, page 125, line 36, at end insert "certification by a".

No. 339, in page 126, line 8, after "or" insert "certification by a".

No. 344, in page 127, line 8, after "Schedule 2" insert "paragraph 4(6) of Schedule *(Requirements for recognition of professional body)*".

No. 380, in clause 171, page 140, line 4, after "or" insert "a person certified by a".

No. 383, in clause 173, page 141, line 5, at end insert—

"'certified' and 'certification' mean certified or certification by a recognised professional body for the purposes of Part I of this Act;".

No. 384, in page 141, line 29, leave out "16" and insert "*Professional bodies*".

No. 386, in page 141, line 38, leave out "16" and insert "*Professional bodies*".

No. 388, in page 143, line 12, leave out "16" and insert "*Professional bodies*".

No. 433, after schedule 2, insert the following new Schedule — *Requirements for recognition of professional body*——

"*Statutory status*

1. The body must:—

(a) regulate the practice of a profession in the exercise of statutory powers; or

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

(b) be recognised (otherwise than under this Act) for a statutory purpose by a Minister of the Crown or by, or by the head of, a Northern Ireland department; or

(c) be specified in a provision contained in or made under an enactment as a body whose members are qualified to exercise functions or hold offices specified in that provision.

Certification

2. — (1) The body must have rules, practices and arrangements for securing that no person can be certified by the body for the purposes of Part I of this Act unless the following conditions are satisfied.

(2) The certified person must be either—

(a) an individual who is a member of the body; or

(b) a person managed and controlled by one or more individuals each of whom is a member of a recognised professional body and at least one of whom is a member of the certifying body.

(3) Where the certified person is an individual his main business must be the practice of the profession regulated by the certifying body and he must be practising that profession otherwise than in partnership; and where the certified person is not an individual that person's main business must be the practice of the profession or professions regulated by the recognised professional body or bodies of which the individual or individuals mentioned in sub-paragraph (2)*(b)* above are members.

(4) In the application of sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) above to a certificate which is to be or has been issued to a partnership constituted under the law of England and Wales or Northern Ireland or the law of any other country or territory under which a partnership is not a legal person, references to the certified person shall be construed as references to the partnership.

Safeguards for investors

3. — (1) The body must have rules regulating the carrying on of investment business by persons certified by it; and those rules must in respect of investment business of any kind regulated by them afford to investors protection at least equivalent to that afforded in respect of investment business of that kind by the rules and regulations for the time being in force under Chapter V of Part I of this Act.

(2) The rules under that Chapter to be taken into account for the purposes of this paragraph include the rules made under section *(Financial resources rules)* and under sections 49 and *(Compensation fund)* so far as not themselves applying to persons certified by the body.

Monitoring and enforcement

4.—(1) The body must have adequate arrangements and resources for the effective monitoring of the continued compliance by persons certified by it with the conditions mentioned in paragraph 2 above and rules, practices and arrangements for the withdrawal or suspension of certification (Subject to appropriate transitional provisions) in the event of any of those conditions ceasing to be satisfied.

(2) The body must have adequate arrangements and resources for the effective monitoring and enforcement of compliance by persons certified by it with the rules of the body relating to the carrying on of investment business and with any rules or regulations to which those persons are subject under Chapter V of Part I of this Act in respect of business of a kind regulated by the body.

(3) The arrangements for enforcement must include provision for the withdrawal or suspension of certification and may include provision or disciplining members of the body who manage or control a certified person.

(4) The arrangements for enforcement may make provision for the whole or part of that function to be performed by and to be the responsibility of a body or person independent of the professional body.

(5) The arrangements for enforcement must be such as to secure a proper balance between the interests of persons certified by the body and the interests of the public; and the arrangements shall not be regarded as satisfying that requirement unless the persons responsible for enforcement include a sufficient number of persons who are independent of the body and its members and of persons certified by it.

(6) The arrangements for monitoring may make provision for that function to be performed on behalf of the body (and without affecting its responsibility) by any other body or person who is able and willing to perform it.

Investigation of complaints

5.—(1) The body must have effective arrangements for the investigation of complaints relating to—

(a) the carrying on by persons certified by it of investment business in respect of which they are subject to its rules; and

(b) its regulation of investment business.

(2) Paragraph 4(4) above applies also to arrangements made pursuant to this paragraph.

Promotion and maintenance of standards

6. The body must be able and willing to promote and maintain high standards of integrity and fair dealing in the carrying on of investment business and co-operate, by the sharing of information and otherwise, with the Secretary of State and any other authority body or person having responsibility for the supervision or regulation of investment business or other financial services."

Amendment to the Lords amendment, in page 97, line 12, at end insert

'the whole or part of'.

No. 531, in schedule 12, page 201, line 41, leave out "or recognised professional body".

No. 532, in page 201, line 44, leave out "or body".

No. 533, in page 202, line 1, leave out "or body".

No. 534, in page 202, line 3, at end insert—

"3.—(1) Any proceedings with respect to a decision or proposed decision of a recognised professional body—

(a) refusing or suspending a person's membership of the body:

(b) expelling a member of the body.

(2) Any proceedings with respect to a decision or proposed decision of a recognised professional body or of any other body or person having functions in respect of the enforcement of the recognised professional body's rules relating to the carrying on of investment business—

(a) exercising a power for purposes corresponding to those of Chapter VI of Part I of this Act;

(b) refusing, suspending or withdrawing a certificate issued for the purposes of Part I of this Act."

No. 535 in page 203, line 13 at end insert—

"(2A) A recognised professional body.

(a) A person certified by the body.

(b) An applicant for certification by the body.

(c) A person whose certification by the body is suspended.

(d) An individual who is an associate of a person (whether or not an individual) described in paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above."

No. 536, in page 203, line 16, column 1, leave out "or paragraph 2*(b)* or *(c)* above" and insert

", paragraph 2*(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* or paragraph 2A*(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above".

No. 537, in page 203, line 48, column 1, at end insert—

", any other body or person mentioned in paragraph 3(2) of Part I of this Schedule".

No. 538, in page 204, line 4, column 1, leave out "or paragraph 2*(b)* or *(c)*" and insert

", paragraph 2*(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* or paragraph 2A*(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)*".

No. 539, in page 204, line 23, leave out "or membership" and insert ", membership or certification".

No. 540, in schedule 13, page 206, line 23, leave out from "that" to end of line 43 and insert—

"any of the requirements of section 18(2A) of this Act or paragraphs 2 to 6 of Schedule *(Requirements for recognition of professional body)* to this Act are not satisfied he may in accordance with this paragraph make a recognition order under section 18 of this Act "an interim recognition order" notwithstanding that all or any of those requirements are not satisfied.

(2) The Secretary of State may, subject to sub-paragraphs (2A) and (2B) below, make an interim recognition order if he is satisfied—

(a) that the applicant proposes to adopt rules and practices and to make arrangements which will satisfy such of the requirements mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) above as are not satisfied;

(b) that is not practicable for those rules, practices and arrangements to be brought into effect before the date on which section 3 of this Act comes into force but that they will be brought into effect within a reasonable time thereafter; and

(c) that in the meantime the applicant will enforce its existing rules in such a way, and issue such guidance, as will in respect of investment business of any kind carried on by persons certified by it (or by virtue of paragraph 4A below treated as certified by it) afford to investors protection as nearly as may be equivalent to that provided as respects investment business of that kind by the rules and regulations under Chapter V of Part I of this Act.—

(2A) Where the requirements which are not satisfied consist of or include those mentioned in paragraph 2 of Schedule *(Requirements for recognition of professional body)* to this Act an application for an interim recognition order shall be accompanied by—

(a) a list of the persons to whom the applicant proposes to issue certificates for the purposes of Part I of this Act; and

(b) particulars of the criteria adopted for determining the persons included in the list;

and the Secretary of State shall not make the order unless it appears to him that those criteria conform as nearly as may be to the conditions mentioned in that paragraph and that the applicant will, until the requirements of that paragraph are satisfied, have arrangements for securing that no person is certified by it (or by virtue of paragraph 4A below treated as certified by it) except in accordance with those criteria and for the effective monitoring of continued compliance by those persons with those criteria.

(2B) Where the requirements which are not satisfied consist of or include that mentioned in paragraph 6 of Schedule *(Requirements for recognition of professional body)* to this Act, the Secretary of State shall not make an interim recognition order unless it appears to him that the applicant will, until that requirement is satisfied, take such steps for complying with it as are reasonably practicable."

No. 541, in page 206, line 45, after second "the" insert "practices and".

No. 542, in page 207, line 4, after "rules" insert ", practices".

No. 543, in page 207, line 10, after "rules" insert ", practices".

No. 544, in page 207, line 13, leave out "and arrangements, or other rules" and insert—

", practices and arrangements, or other rules, practices".

No. 545, in page 207, line 22, after "rules" insert ", practices".

No. 546, in page 207, line 25, after "rules" insert ", practices".

No. 547, in page 207, line 27, leave out "of subsection (2)*(b)* and *(c)* of that section" and insert—

"mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) above."

No. 548, in page 207, line 30, at end insert—

"*Interim authorisation by recognised professional bodies*

4A.—(1) If at the time when an interim recognition order is made in respect of a professional body that body is unable to issue certificates for the purposes of this Act, any person who at that time is included in the list furnished by that body to the Secretary of State in accordance with paragraph 4(2A)*(a)* above shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as a person certified by that body.

(2) If at any time while an interim recognition order is in force in respect of a professional body and before the body is able to issue certificates as mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) above the body notifies the Secretary of State that a person not included in that list satisfied the criteria of which particulars were furnished by the body in accordance with paragraph 4(2A)*(b)* above, that person shall, on receipt of the notification by the Secretary of State, be treated for the purposes of this Act as a person certified by that body.

(3) If at any time while an interim recognition order is in force in respect of a professional body it appears to the body—

(a) that a person treated by virtue of sub-paragraph (1) or (2) above as certified by it has ceased (after the expiration of such transitional period, if any, as appears to the body to be appropriate) to satisfy the criteria mentioned in sub-paragraph (2) above; or

(b) that any such person should for any other reason cease to be treated as certified by it.

it shall forthwith give notice of that fact to the Secretary of State and the person in question shall, on receipt of that notification by the Secretary of State, cease to be treated as certified by that body.

(4) Where by virtue of this paragraph a partnership is treated as certified by a recognised professional body section 15(3) of this Act shall apply as it applies where a certificate has in fact been issued to a partnership.

(5) Where by virtue of this paragraph any persons are treated as certified by a recognised professional body the requirements of paragraph 2 of Schedule *(Requirements for recognition of professional body)* to this Act so far as relating to the retention by a person of a certificate issued by that body and the requirements of paragraph 4 of that Schedule shall apply to the body as if the references to persons certified by it included references to persons treated as certified."

No. 549, in page 207, line 30, at end insert—

"*Power of recognised professional body to make rules required by this Act.*

4B. — (1) Where a recognised professional body regulates the practice of a professional in the exercise of statutory powers the matters in respect of which rules can be made in the exercise of those powers shall, if they would not otherwise do so, include any matter in respect of which rules are required to be made—

(a) so that the recognition order in respect of that body can cease to be an interim recognition order; or

(b) where the recognition order was not, or has ceased to be, an interim recognition order, so that the body can continue to be a recognised professional body.

(2) Rules made by virtue of this paragraph may in particular make provision for the issue, withdrawal and suspension of certificates for the purposes of this Act and the making of charges in respect of their issue and may accordingly apply to persons who are, or are to be, certified or treated as certified by the body in question whether or not they are persons in relation to whom rules could be made apart from this paragraph.

(3) Rules made by virtue of this paragraph may make different provision for different cases.

(4) The Secretary of State may at the request of a recognised professional body by order extend, modify or exclude any statutory provision relating to the regulation of the conduct, practice, or discipline of members of that body to such extent as he thinks necessary, or expedient in consequence of the provisions of this paragraph; and any order made by virtue of this sub-paragraph shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."

Mr. Howard: Although a detailed explanation of the effects of this large group of amendments would take rather more time than is available, it may be helpful if I give some of the background to their overall purpose.

The Government recognise that a large number of professional people—solicitors, accountants, surveyors, and so on—engage in investment business incidentally to the practice of their profession. Indeed, in some cases the investment business which they carry on has come to be regarded as an ancillary service that someone practising

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the profession in question is widely expected to provide. Clearly, there has to be a system of regulation for investment business carried on in this way, but it did not seem to us necessary that many thousands of professionals should be effectively forced into joining recognised self-regulating organisations if other arrangements could be equally effective. In particular, it seemed sensible to build on the professional monitoring and disciplinary arrangements which the main professional bodies already have if this could provide adequate investor protection. That principle underlay our original proposals and has not changed.

The clauses as originally drafted provided for the authorisation of individual members of recognised professional bodies who were practising their profession on their own account or in partnership. This was because at present membership of such bodies is generally confined to individuals and the bodies' disciplinary sanctions are generally available only against individual members. However, it has been suggested that it would be desirable to allow in the Bill for the authorisation of other forms of practice, particularly corporate practices. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors already allows its members to practise in corporate form, and there are similar developments under way in other professional bodies. The Government accept that it would not be desirable to stand in the way of such developments, and the first new clause therefore allows authorisation to be conferred on corporate practices as well as partnerships and individuals practising on their own account. This apparently simple change necessitates a large number of amendments to take account of the fact that the firm certified by a recognised professional body may not itself be a member of the body, although it must be subject to the body's rules.

The second purpose of the amendments is to clarify and extend the requirements for recognition. Some critics have suggested that the special regime for professional bodies will be a "soft option". We have always made it clear that that was not our intention. The House will recognise that the new schedule includes many requirements which are derived from the corresponding provisions of schedule 2 for recognised self-regulating organisations. I would particularly like to draw the attention of the House to paragraph 3, which makes it clear that the investment business rules of the body must satisfy the same equivalence test as the rules of recognised self-regulating organisations, and to paragraph 4, which sets out the requirement for compliance with the rules to be effectively maintained and enforced.

The third main change is introduced by the third new clause, which gives the Secretary of State or designated agency an intermediate sanction, short of derecognition, against a recognised body which fails to comply with a requirement for recognition or with any obligation, such as an obligation to provide information, to which it is subject by virtue of the Bill. The sanction is a powerful one because if a recognised body were to disregard an order of the court it would be in contempt and liable to punishment accordingly.

This rather complicated group of amendments makes important changes to the provisions of the Bill relating to recognised professional bodies. The amendments represent the outcome of detailed consultation with the professional bodies most likely to apply for recognition and I believe that they are in general now satisfied with them. The amendments will enable a greater range of businesses to be authorised by this route while providing for fully adequate protection to investors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The amendment of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) is grouped with these amendments. If he wishes to speak to his amendment, it will be perfectly in order for him to do so.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Minister for his explanation of this quite substantial group of new provisions. The Opposition do not quarrel with the purpose of the amendments. Happily, we can endorse most of what the Minister said about their intention. However, I should like to put to him one question. It arises from the notes on clauses that have been so helpfully provided by the Department, and it may help if I express myself more or less in the language that the Department used to explain the effect of the clause.

It points out that a recognised professional body will be able to issue certificates to different groups of people — bodies corporate, partnerships, unincorporated bodies. Then it makes the point that paragraph 2 of schedule 2—one of the provisions that accompanies the new clauses — requires a professional body to have arrangements and rules specifying the classes of persons who are entitled to be certified so as to ensure that only members of those classes are certified. If, however, by any chance a recognised professional body were to make a mistake and issued a certificate contrary to its own rules to a person who was not a member of the specified class, that person would nevertheless be authorised as the possessor of the appropriate certificate.

I understand why that is so, but I think that the Minister will agree that, if left open-ended in that way, it is a rather dangerous provision. Is he able to help the House by illustrating how the situation might arise and what measures would be taken by the Department to ensure that it was not repeated? It would be most unfortunate if a recognised professional body were consistently to issue certificates, contrary to its own rules, to people who in the ordinary course of events ought not to be authorised but who, by virtue of this delegation of powers to professional bodies, are permitted to carry on investment business as though authorised to do so.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): When my hon. Friend replies to the debate on these amendments, will he look at amendment No. 21, which has caused a certain amount of concern? It relates to professional bodies. I am a member of a professional body, and anything that is connected with accountancy means that I am subject to disciplinary action if anything goes wrong.

Many people are worried about the definition of "acceptable limits." Who is to determine what are acceptable limits for investment business? A large firm of accountants may have a turnover of £10 million or £20 million. If 5 per cent. of that business is investment business, a huge amount of money is involved. However, if a person is employed full-time in the life assurance business—I have to declare an interest as I advise the Life Insurance Association—his or her total income will be very small compared with the 5 per cent. or the 2·5 per cent. investment business of a large firm of accountants or solicitors. The investment side of an accountant's or a

lawyer's receipts will be a small part of his total income, whereas that represents the total income of a full-time intermediary.

The LIA and other professional bodies are worried about the fact that there could be unfair competition. Lawyers and accountants belong to recognised professional bodies and are provided with a blanket certificate, if I may put it that way. However, a part-time intermediary has to join a self-regulating organisation, and SRO rules and regulations are probably far more stringent than those of the disciplinary committee of a professional body.

It would be ridiculous to expect legitimate professional bodies to have to register with an SRO, and I should like my hon. Friend to reassure me on that point. Under no circumstances should one create in this Bill unfair competition between those who work part-time and those who work full-time in the financial services industry.

Mr. Tim Smith: I very much welcome the changes that have been made as a result of the amendments. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister mentioned three. I should like to mention another helpful amendment. Originally, the Bill was drafted in terms of whether the investment business of a professional person was or was not incidental. Now it has been turned around. The Bill says that a professional person's main business must be the practising of a profession and not the running of an investment business. There was great doubt about what "incidental" meant, but that concept has now been removed from the Bill.

I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) about the meaning of "acceptable limits". It would be helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister could clarify what it means. Amendment No. 21 refers to

"acceptable limits on the kinds of investment business."

I assume that what it means is that when the Securities and Investments Board discusses with a body, with a view to its recognition, the terms upon which it might be recognised, it will look at the kinds of investment business that will or will not be authorised.

Part II of schedule I contains a list of different kinds of investment business. I assume that the intention is to ensure that there will be acceptable limits upon which categories of investment business are to be part of the recognition deal. It seems to me that there will be a trade-off as to what kinds of investment business the recognised professional body will be able to authorise and, as a quid pro quo, what rules and regulations it will need to deal with authorisation. Obviously, for investment advice a much less rigorous regime is needed than for investment management, where one is managing clients' funds. It would be helpful if my right hon. and learned Friend could clarify that point.

I shall now speak briefly about my modest amendment which is to subparagraph (6) of paragraph 4 to the new schedule on page 97. This is a new provision about monitoring and says that monitoring can be undertaken by somebody other than the body itself. Subparagraph 4 has a similar provision about enforcement but there it says that the whole or part of the enforcement function can be delegated, and it does not make the same provision for monitoring. It might be administratively convenient for part of the monitoring to be delegated and for part of it to be kept back.

7 pm

Mr. Bermingham: One matter arises from the meaning of "acceptable limits". Will the Minister address his mind to what happens in a firm of solicitors where a partner is a trustee of a large and substantial trust with considerable investments? In the City of London and throughout Britain, there are a considerable number of solicitor trustees who manage between them, not millions but often billions of pounds' worth of investment. What does "acceptable limits" mean in such cases? Can the Minister advise us on that?

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I endorse the points that have been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark). I shall restrict my remarks to Lords amendment No. 21. It says that the recognised professional body

"must have rules which impose acceptable limits on the kind of investment business which may be carried on".

I think that I echo a point made on both sides of the House when I ask "acceptable to whom?" Let us suppose for a moment that a recognised body such as the Law Society decided that it was perfectly acceptable for a high percentage of a solicitor's activities to relate to investment. I do not suggest that the Law Society is likely to do that. There are those of us who believe that in some way that would confer a lesser measure of investor protection than would be extended by an independent investment intermediary operating under the other provisions of the Bill which require him to register with his self-regulatory organisation.

Throughout the approach by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister is the aim to create a system in which fair competition prevails, irrespective of the vehicle through which one seeks to obtain investment advice. I should like to see a closer examination of the words "acceptable limits" because the clause, as amended by their Lordships, remains rather ill-defined. It might be thought to provide a soft option for those who, to a large extent, will still engage in advising people on investment. It would be helpful if the Minister could clarify exactly what is intended by the words "acceptable limits". More important, perhaps he would underline that in dealing with an investment adviser who is authorised by a registered professional body, the investor will receive no less protection than he could expect to receive if seeking his investment advice through an independent investment intermediary registered by a self-regulatory organisation or the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Cash: I should like to draw attention to a point about which I have had extensive discussions on a number of occasions with the Minister during the passage of this Bill. We have also exchanged correspondence about the Society of Company and Commercial Accountants. That is a professional body with about 8,000 members and it has a well-deserved reputation for advising small businesses. In amendment No. 20, a professional body is defined as

"a body which regulates the practice of a profession".

Amendment No. 433 sets out the requirements for the recognition of a professional body. It says:

"The body must:—

(a) regulate the practice of a profession in the exercise of statutory powers;".

The Society of Company and Commercial Accountants would to all intents and purposes be excluded as a recognised professional body. One could write a treatise

[Mr. Cash]

on the reasons why that society should be accepted, but I have no intention of going through them. The society regards the provisions as unfair discrimination against it. No specific reason has been given about why it should not get this status. The Minister was good enough to send me a letter, which arrived today, in which he said that Parliament has had a number of opportunities to amend the Bill during its passage but has not done so. The inference there is that Parliament does not look upon the society as important enough to merit the status of a recognised professional body.

I am the vice-chairman of the Conservative Small Business Bureau and secretary of the Back-Bench Committee on Small Businessses, and I am aware of the importance in the high street of relatively small accountancy bodies that are able to provide high quality service to small businesses. The proposals discriminate against the Society of Company and Commercial Accountants and that is unreasonable. I sincerely hope that the inference in the letter that I received from the Minister, that to some extent the door remains open, is something upon which we can build in the future. Many of the society's members hold important positions in industry and commerce and should receive the kind of recognition that they deserve.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I am a little anxious about what my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said because if we go down the road that he suggests we could say that all sorts of bodies ought to be included. Those bodies might be unsuitable and might not have members who are sufficiently well qualified. Does my hon. Friend think that the approval given to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors should be extended to include the National Association of Estate Agents? There are worthy people in that association, but I am not sure that they are qualified to give investment advice. As far as I am aware, the accountancy body about which my hon. Friend speaks is not recognised under the Companies Acts and might therefore be considered unsuitable.

I should now like to pose a question to the Minister. My institution now allows corporate bodies to practise. I am a little worried that we may reach the stage where some institutional bodies may acquire shares in a partnership and use them as a means to gain recognition because they might not otherwise be able to gain recognition. That may be prevented by these proposals, but they are rather complex. Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend could enlighten me.

Mr. Howard: I shall begin by responding to the point raised by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). He asked what the situation would be in the event of a mistake being made in the granting of a certificate by a recognised professional body, thereby enabling the holder of that certificate to carry out investment business. He also asked what action could be taken if mistakes like that were made repeatedly. In an isolated incident the certificate could be withdrawn as soon as the mistake was discovered. If a recognised professional body were consistently to issue certificates to people who were not in the specified classes that the hon. Gentleman spoke about, or if it failed to withdraw such certificates when the facts came to its attention, there would be grounds for the exercise of the powers contained in clause 19, which deals with the revocation of recognition of a professional body.

New clause 3, which we shall be debating later, provides for the obtaining of a compliance order to deal with the recognised professional body. Those safeguards are built into the Bill and they would deal with the matters to which the hon. Gentleman drew attention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and my other hon. Friends raised the matter of acceptable limits for the purpose of the clause, as did the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). It would be for the Secretary of State or the designated agency to determine whether the rules of a particular professional body imposed acceptable limits for the purposes of the clause.

New subsection (2A) of amendment No. 21 states:

> "The body must have rules which impose acceptable limits on the kinds of investment business which may be carried on by persons certified by it and the circumstances in which they may carry on such business. . ."

The rules must preclude a person certified by the body from carrying on investment business outside those limits unless he is authorised otherwise than by virtue of that certification or exempt in respect of that business under any of the provisions of chapter 4. This requirement for a scope rule is analogous to the corresponding requirements for self-regulating organisations, but the reference to circumstances reflects the intention that investment business carried on under the supervision of a recognised professional body will be limited to that carried on incidentally to the practise of the profession.

There is no requirement in the Bill for a percentage limit or any other form of limit. What is appropriate will depend upon the circumstances. What is acceptable will depend especially on the type of business which a recognised professional body regulates and its capability for enforcing its rules effectively. The rules will have to be equivalent to those of the designated agency. That test of equivalence is common to the professional bodies and to the self-regulating organisations. There can therefore be no question of recognised professional bodies being a soft option in comparison with self-regulating organisations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) dealt with a different point, which he said that I had answered in a letter which he received today. As that letter was sent in reply to a letter which I received from my hon. Friend yesterday, that is not altogether bad going. Some of the difficulties which arise in the context of his point were answered by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill). I suspect that this might be what is sometimes termed "an ongoing issue" between my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and I. I cannot give him any further comfort this evening than I gave in the letter that he received earlier today.

In relation to the final point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West, the new schedule provides that a recognised professional body may issue a certificate only to a person managed and controlled by individuals who are members of the recognised professional body. My hon. Friend will see that the authority for that lies in paragraph 2(2)*(b)* of the new schedule proposed in amendment No. 433.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), in answer to his second point, that it is already possible in the terms of the Bill at present for the monitoring authority to be delegated in part.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 26

GRANT AND REFUSAL OF AUTHORISATION

Lords amendments made: No. 28, in page 16, line 33, at end insert—

(aa) if the applicant is a partnership, to any of the partners;".

No. 29, in page 17, line 5, leave out subsection (6) and insert—

"(6) An authorisation granted to a partnership—

(a) shall be granted in the partnership name; and

(b) shall authorise the carrying on of investment business in that name (or with the Secretary of State's consent in any other name) by the partnership to which the authorisation is granted, by any partnership which succeeds to that business or by any person who succeeds to that business having previously carried it on in partnership;

and, in relation to an authorisation granted to a partnership constituted under the law of England and Wales or Northern Ireland or the law of any other country or territory under which a partnership is not a legal person, references in this Act to the holder of the authorisation or the authorised person shall be construed as references to the persons or person for the time being authorised by the authorisation to carry on investment business as mentioned in paragraph *(b)* above.". —*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 27

WITHDRAWAL AND SUSPENSION OF AUTHORISATION

Lords amendments made: No. 30, in page 17, line 30, at end insert

"or has contravened any prohibition or requirement imposed under this Act"

No. 31, in page 17, line 33, at end insert—

"( ) Where the holder of the authorisation is a member of a recognised self-regulating organisation the rules, prohibitions and requirements referred to in paragraph *(b)* of subsection (1) above include the rules of that organisation and any prohibition or requirement imposed by virtue of those rules; and where he is a person certified by a recognised professional body the rules, prohibitions and requirements referred to in that paragraph include the rules of that body which regulate the carrying on by him of investment business and any prohibition or requirement imposed by virtue of those rules."—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 30

AUTHORISATION IN OTHER MEMBER STATE

Lords amendment made: No. 32, in page 19, line 27, after "business" insert "maintained by him" — *[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 32

TERMINATION AND SUSPENSION OF AUTHORISATION

Lords amendments made: No. 33, in page 21, line 10, after "information" insert

"or has contravened any prohibition or requirement imposed under this Act"

No. 34, in page 21, line 19, leave out from "rules" to end of line 21 and insert

", prohibitions and requirements referred to in subsection (1) above include the rules of that organisation and any prohibition or requirement imposed by virtue of those rules; and in the case of a person who is certified by a recognised professional body the rules, prohibitions and requirements referred to in that subsection include the rules of that body which regulate the carrying on by him of investment business and any prohibition or requirement imposed by virtue of those rules."

No. 35, in page 21, line 41, leave out subsection (7). —*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 37

CLEARING HOUSES

Lords amendment made: No. 36, in page 24, line 28, leave out

"the facilities provided by it"

and insert

"anything done by it in its capacity as a person providing clearing services".—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 38

GRANT AND REVOCATION OF RECOGNITION

Lords amendments made: No. 37, in page 25, line 27, leave out "and" and insert—

"*(aa)* has adequate arrangements and resources for the effective monitoring and enforcement of compliance with its rules or, as respects monitoring, arrangements providing for that function to be performed on behalf of the clearing house (and without affecting its responsibility) by another body or person who is able and willing to perform it;"

No. 38, in page 25, line 28, after "provides" insert "or is able to provide"

No. 39, in page 25, line 31, at end insert

"; and

( ) is able and willing to comply with duties corresponding to those imposed in the case of recognised investment exchange by paragraph 5 of that Schedule.'—*[Mr. Howard.]*

New Clause

OVERSEAS INVESTMENT EXCHANGES AND CLEARING HOUSES

Lords amendment: No. 40, after clause 38, insert the following new clause—

"(1) Any application under section 36(1) or 38(1) above by a body or association whose head office is situated in a country outside the United Kingdom shall contain the address of a place in the United Kingdom for the service on that body or association of notices or other documents required or authorised to be served on it under this Act.

(2) In relation to any such body or association sections 36(4) and 38(4) above shall have effect with the substitution for the requirements there mentioned of the following requirements, that is to say—

(a) that the body or associations is, in the country in which its head office is situated, subject to supervision which, together with the rules and practices of that body or association, is such that investors in the United Kingdom are afforded protection in relation to the body or association at least equivalent to that provided by the provisions of this Act in relation to investment exchanges and clearing houses in respect of which recognition orders are made otherwise than by virtue of this subjection; and

(b) that the body or association is able and willing to co-operate, by the sharing of information and otherwise, with the authorities, bodies and persons

[Mr. Howard]

responsible in the United Kingdom for the supervision and regulation of investment business or other financial services; and

(c) that adequate arrangements exist for such co-operation between those responsible for the supervision of the body or association in the country mentioned in paragraph *(a)* above and the authorities, bodies and persons mentioned in paragraph *(b)* above.

(3) In determining whether to make a recognition order by virtue of subsection (2) above the Secretary of State may have regard to the extent to which persons in the United Kingdom and persons in the country mentioned in that subsection have access to the financial markets in each other's countries.

(4) In relation to a body or association declared to be a recognised investment exchange or recognised clearing house by a recognition order made by virtue of subsection (2) above—

(a) the reference in section 35(2) above to the matters dealt with in Schedule 3 to this Act shall be construed as a reference to corresponding matters;

(b) sections 36(7) and (8) and 38(7) and (8) above shall have effect as if the requirements mentioned in section 36(7)*(a)* and in section 38(7)*(a)* were those of subsection (2)*(a)* and *(b)* above; and

(c) the grounds on which the order may be revoked under section 36(7) or 38(7) above shall include the ground that it appears to the Secretary of State that revocation is desirable in the interests of investors and potential investors in the United Kingdom.

(5) In this section "country" includes any territory or any part of a country or territory.

(6) A body or association declared to be a recognised investment exchange or recognised clearing house by a recognition order made by virtue of subsection (2) above is in this Act referred to as an "overseas investment exchange" or an "overseas clearing house".".

7.15 pm

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 183, in clause 96, page 76, line 7, leave out "subsection (5)" and insert "subsections (5) and (5A)".

No. 188, page 76, line 16, at end insert—

"(5A) This section does not apply to the making or revocation of a recognition order in respect of an overseas investment exchange or overseas clearing house or the making of an application to the court under section 12 above in respect of any such exchange or clearing house."

No. 190, page 81, line 9, at end insert—

"( ) Subsection (3)*(c)* above does not apply to an overseas investment exchange or overseas clearing house."

No. 311, page 112, line 21, after "exchange" insert "other than an overseas investment exchange".

No. 369, page 133, line 25, after "exchange" insert "other than an overseas investment exchange".

No. 374, page 134, line 6, after "exchange" insert "other than an overseas investment exchange".

No. 387, page 142, line 8, at end insert—

""overseas investment exchange" and "overseas clearing house" mean a recognised investment exchange or recognised clearing house in the case of which the recognition order was made by virtue of section *(Overseas investment exchanges and clearing houses)* above;".

Mr. Howard: These amendments will facilitate the proposed trading links between exchanges in clearing houses in the United Kingdom and those overseas. This is especially desirable in view of the increasingly international nature of the financial services industry. A number of links are being planned between exchanges and clearing houses here and overseas which will enable investors in the United Kingdom to benefit from the increasingly diverse variety of investment services available throughout the world and will help to promote to foreign investors the services provided by investment businesses in the United Kingdom.

The amendments reflect the fact that some overseas investment exchanges and clearing houses may not, because of a special feature in the regulatory regime in their home state, be able to meet all the requirements for recognition in the Bill. Nevertheless, if one takes account of the exchange or clearing house rule as to the supervision to which it is subject and its ability and willingness to co-operate with the relevant authorities here, the interests of investors using its facilities are as well protected as the interests of an investor using the facilities in a domestic exchange or clearing house recognised under the Bill.

The amendments therefore provide that if the Secretary of State is satisfied that the conditions are met, and if there are adequate arrangements for mutual co-operation in the sharing of information between the regulatory authorities in the country concerned and the authorities here, he may recognise an overseas exchange or clearing house even though it does not meet the strict letter of the requirements imposed on domestic exchanges or clearing houses. This is not a soft option. It is a sensible and pragmatic approach to recognising and building on the regulatory regimes in other countries. This should be a mutual process. The clause provides that in deciding whether to recognise an overseas exchange or clearing house the Secretary of State may have regard to the extent to which persons in the United Kingdom have access to the financial markets in the country concerned.

The amendments respond to the need for the Bill to reflect the increasingly international nature of financial services. They make the appropriate provisions for overseas investment exchanges and overseas clearing houses and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Bermingham: I hope that the Minister can put my mind at rest about these amendments. The original idea was that we should recognise only those exchanges which had rules and controls comparable with the proposed rules and controls in our markets. There appears to have been a little wavering at the edges in the interests of promoting international trade, to use the Minister's words. It would appear that if some rules and controls are a little below our standards we may still recognise those exchanges and clearing houses, especially if people of our country are dealing in or involved with those exchanges. That is a recipe for trouble. We have only to look back over the past few years to see the flow of funds around the world dodging in and out of various tax havens such as the Cayman Islands and falling ultimately into the hands of British citizens who then rather rapidly depart for foreign parts. We never seem to extradite them from abroad.

I am very worried about how investors and investments can be moved around the world and about the idea of recognising international exchanges if they do not have the same controls and regulations as ours. At the end of the day, we must be looking after one person. As the Bill has trundled its weary way through the various Committees and passages in another place, and as it has grown in size,

the importance of that one person has diminished. That person is the investor. There are so many complications and we now appear to be easing off the little international agreements which we were to have so that the controls and regulations of those we recognise should at least be as good as the controls and regulations which we ourselves may establish. I hope that the Minister will comment on that point.

Mr. Gould: The Minister rightly referred to the reciprocal aspect of the amendments and drew attention to something which I warmly endorse—the importance of obtaining international agreements on common standards. I have supported from afar his efforts with the American authorities. This is an opportunity for him to explain to the House what progress has been made in that direction since we last discussed the matter.

Mr. Howard: Since these matters were last debated a memorandum of understanding has been agreed between the United States and Britain which provides in detail for the circumstances in which information is to be exchanged between regulators in the two countries. It is a far-reaching agreement of considerable significance. I hope that it will provide the basis for a treaty between both countries in the near future.

We are hoping to build upon that precedent and we are discussing with the Japanese on the basis that it might be possible to come to an agreement with them. We hope that in due course it will be possible to come to agreements with yet other countries.

We are aware of the importance of co-operation between international regulators. I believe that the key to that operation is the mutual exchange of information, because that information is the key to discovering who is responsible for misbehaviour. We have made a good deal of progress and we shall continue to pursue the matter.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) will forgive me if I say that I have already dealt with his questions. I said that it was essential that such investors' interests should be as well protected as the interests of an investor using the facilities of a domestic exchange or clearing house recognised under the Bill. This provision does not detract from that important requirement for the provision of proper protection for investors. However, circumstances, perhaps arising out of the law of the country concerned, for other reasons might prevent the clearing house or investment exchange overseas from complying with all the provisions which would apply to clearing houses and investment exchanges in Britain.

It is not necessary to insist on compliance with each of those requirements, as long as the essential safeguard of adequate investor protection, commensurate with that provided by the arrangements in Britain, is available. Only if that protection is available do these provisions come into operation.

Mr. Bermingham: I agree with the Minister, but perhaps he has misunderstood my point. Some countries might not meet every criterion of our regulations, but the Minister said that when the regulations were as good as ours they would still be considered. Who will judge how well an investor is protected under regulations which are not equivalent to ours and which are operated in a country whose laws are different from ours?

Mr. Howard: The Secretary of State. It is not a transferable power.

Mr. Cash: Perhaps we should keep a close watch on the extent to which, when other countries are acquiring interests in investment exchanges, the equivalent rules or the way in which misbehaviour can occur is related to the activities of countries which do not have the same attitudes as we have. I know that such exchanges will be covered by the Bill, but I hope that those who come into the country will be carefully monitored and a check will be made of which companies are owned by which countries.

Mr. Howard: That is a different point and is not related to the provisions which deal with the recognition of overseas investors. There is no intention of accepting any less investor protection in terms of the recognition of such bodies than applies to domestic bodies.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

Listed Money Market Institutions

Lords amendment: No. 41, after clause 40, insert the following new clause—

".—(1) A person for the time being included in a list maintained by the Bank of England for the purposes of this section "a listed institution" is an exempted person in respect of, and of anything done for the purposes of, any transaction to which Part I or Part II of Schedule *(Listed money market institutions)* to this Act applies and in respect of any arrangements made by him with a view to other persons entering into a transaction to which Part III of that Schedule applies.

(2) The conditions imposed by the Bank of England for admission to the list referred to in this section and the arrangements made by it for a person's admission to and removal from the list shall require the approval of the Treasury; and this section shall cease to have effect if that approval is withdrawn but without prejudice to its again having effect if approval is given for fresh conditions or arrangements.

(3) The Bank of England shall publish the list as for the time being in force and provide a certified copy of it at the request of any person wishing to refer to it in legal proceedings.

(4) Such a certified copy shall be evidence or, in Scotland, sufficient evidence of the contents of the list; and a copy purporting to be certified by or on behalf of the Bank shall be deemed to have been duly certified unless the contrary is shown."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 57, page 29, line 24, after "40" insert ", *(Listed money market institutions*".

No. 435, after schedule 3, insert the following new schedule—

Listed Money Market Institutions

Part I

Transactions not subject to Monetary Limit

"1. This Part of this Schedule applies to any transaction entered into by the listed institution as principal (or as agent for another listed institution) with another listed institution or the Bank of England (whether acting as principal or agent) if the transaction falls within paragraph 2 or 3 belowe.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

2.—(1) A transaction falls within this paragraph if it is in respect of an investment specified in sub-paragraph (2) below and

(a) in the case of an investment within any of paragraphs *(a)* to *(d)* of that sub-paragraph the transaction is not regulated by the rules of a recognised investment exchange; and

(b) in the case of any other investment specified in that sub-paragraph, the transaction is not made on such an exchange or expressed to be as so made.

(2) The investments referred to above are—

(a) a debenture or other instrument falling within paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 to this Act which is issued—

(i) by a recognised bank or licensed institution within the meaning of the Banking Act 1979 or a building society incorporated in, or in any part of, the United Kingdom; and

(ii) on terms requiring repayment not later than five years from the date of issue;

(b) any other debenture or instrument falling within paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 to this Act which is issued on terms requiring repayment not later than one year from the date of issue;

(c) loan stock, or any other instrument, falling within paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 to this Act which is issued on terms requiring repayment not later than one year or, if issued by a local authority in the United Kingdom, five years from the date of issue;

(d) a warrant or other instrument falling within paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 to this Act which entitles the holder to subscribe for an investment within paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above;

(e) any certificate or other instrument falling within paragraph 5 or 11 of Schedule 1 to this Act and relating to an investment within paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above;

(f) an option falling within paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 to this Act and relating to—

(i) an investment within paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above;

(ii) currency of the United Kingdom or of any other country or territory; or

(iii) gold or silver;

(g) rights under a contract falling within paragraph 8 of Schedule 1 to this Act for the sale of—

(i) an investment within paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above;

(ii) currency of the United Kingdom or of any other country or territory; or

(iii) gold or silver;

(h) rights under a contract falling within paragraph 9 of Schedule 1 to this Act by reference to fluctuations in—

(i) the value or price of any investment falling within any of the foregoing paragraphs; or

(ii) currency of the United Kingdom or of any other country or territory; or

(iii) the rate of interest on loans in any such currency or any index of such rates;

(i) an option to acquire or dispose of an investment within paragraph *(f)*, *(g)* or *(h)* above.

3.—(1) A transaction falls within this paragraph if it is a transaction by which one of the parties agrees to sell or transfer an investment falling within paragraph 2 or 3 of Schedule 1 to this Act and by the same or a collateral agreement that party agrees, or acquires an option, to buy back or re-acquire that investment or an equivalent amount of a similar investment within twelve months of the sale or transfer.

(2) For the purposes of this paragraph investments shall be regarded as similar if they entitle their holders to the same rights against the same persons as to capital and interest and the same remedies for the enforcement of those rights.

PART II

TRANSACTIONS SUBJECT TO MONETARY LIMIT

4. — (1) This Part of this Schedule applies to any transaction entered into by the listed institution—

(a) as principal (or as agent for another listed institution) with an unlisted person (whether acting as principal or agent);

(b) as agent for an unlisted person with a lised institution or the Bank of England (whether acting as principal or agent); or

(c) as agent for an unlisted person with another unlisted person (whether acting as principal or agent),

if the transaction falls within paragraph 2 or 3 above and the conditions in paragraph 5 or, as the case may be, paragraph 7 below are satisfied.

(2) In this Part of this Schedule and in Part III below "unlisted person" means a person who is neither a listed institution nor the Bank of England.

5. — (1) In the case of a transaction falling within paragraph 2 above the conditions referred to above are as follows but are subject to paragraph 6 below.

(2) The consideration for a transaction in respect of an investment falling within paragraph 2(2)*(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above must be not less than £100,000.

(3) The consideration payable on subscription in the case of an investment falling within paragraph 2(2)*(d)* must be not less than £500,000.

(4) The value or price of the property in respect of which an option within paragraph 2(2)*(f)* above is granted must be not less than £500,000.

(5) The price payable under a contract within paragraph 2(2)*(g)* above must be not less than £500,000.

(6) The value or price the fluctation in which, or the amount the fluctuation in the interest on which, is relevant for the purposes of a contract within paragraph 2(2)*(h)* above must be not less than £500,000.

(7) In the case of an option falling within paragraph 2(2)*(i)* above the condition in sub-paragraph (4), (5) or (6) above, as the case may be, must be satisfied in respect of the investment to which the option relates.

6. The conditions in paragraph 5 above do not apply to a transaction entered into by the listed institution as mentioned in paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* of paragraph 4(1) above if—

(a) the unlisted person mentioned in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* or, as the case may be, each of the unlisted persons mentioned in paragraph *(c)* has in the previous eighteen months entered into another transaction in respect of an investment specified in paragraph 2(2) above;

(b) those conditions were satisfied in the case of that other transaction; and

(c) that other transaction was entered into by that person (whether acting as principal or agent) with the listed institution (whether acting as principal or agent) or was entered into by that person through the agency of that institution or was entered into by him (whether acting as principal or agent) as a result of arrangements made by that institution.

7. In the case of a transaction falling within paragraph 3 above the condition referred to in paragraph 4 above is that the consideration for the sale or transfer must be not less than £100,000.

8. The monetary limits mentioned in this Part of this Schedule refer to the time when the transaction is entered into; and where the consideration, value, price or amount referred to above is not in sterling it shall be converted at the rate of exchange prevailing at that time.

PART III

TRANSACTIONS ARRANGED BY LISTED INSTITUTIONS

9. Subject to paragraphs 10 and 11 below, this part of this Schedule applies to any transaction arranged by the listed institution which—

(a) is entered into by another listed institution as principal (or as agent for another listed institution) with another listed institution or the Bank of England (whether acting as principal or agent);

(b) is entered into by another listed institution (whether acting as principal or agent) with an unlisted person (whether acting as principal or agent); or

(c) is entered into between unlisted persons (whether acting as principal or agent),

if the transaction falls within paragraph 2 or 3 above.

10. In the case of a transaction falling within paragraph 2 above paragraph 9*(b)* and *(c)* above do not apply unless either the conditions in paragraph 5 above are satisfied or—

(a) the unlisted person mentioned in paragraph *(b)* or, as the case may be, each of the unlisted persons mentioned on paragraph *(c)* has in the previous eighteen months entered into another transaction in respect of an investment specified in paragraph 2(2) above;

(b) those conditions were satisfied in the case of that other transaction; and

(c) that other transaction was entered into by that person (whether acting as principal or agent) with the listed institution making the arrangements (whether acting as principal or agent) or through the agency of that institution or was entered into by that person (whether acting as principal or agent) as a result of arrangements made by that institution.

11. In the case of a transaction falling within paragraph 3 above paragraph 9*(b)* and *(c)* above do not apply unless the condition in paragraph 7 above is satisfied."

Mr. Howard: These amendments reflect the decision announced by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, in May, that the Bank of England should regulate the wholesale money, bullion and foreign currency markets. The behaviour of these markets is closely connected with the money supply and the Bank of England, as part of its economic responsibilities, has by tradition been closely involved with them and has generally supervised them. Under the Bill as originally drafted, some of the activities in these markets were covered by the Bill, and others were not. This was not an altogether satisfactory position and on reflection it was decided that the bank should be made responsible for these markets. The Government will be publishing a consultative document about their future regulation later this year.

As a consequence of this decision and in order to reduce supervisory overlap, the Economic Secretary announced that the Bill would be amended so as to remove from regulation under it certain transactions in the wholesale markets undertaken or arranged by institutions subject to supervision by the bank under the new arrangements. These amendments implement that undertaking. They have been the subject of widespread consultation with interested parties. The general approach has been widely welcomed and we have been able to meet the detailed difficulties which have been drawn to our attention. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Gould: The Minister will accept that this is an important innovation and that the House should pause to register what is happening.

The amendments deal with the problem that has bedevilled the Bill in different areas. I refer to drawing a distinction between those areas of investment business which affect the small, unprofessional investor and those which are in the hands of professionals. The wholesale money markets fall within that latter category.

I can accept the broad argument for treating the two categories in slightly different ways, or in a substantially different way, by removing one category from the supervisory framework in the Bill. I am less convinced by the argument about a supervisory overlap. That has never been regarded as a reason for exempting other forms of investment activity from the Bill's provisions. Almost every form of business covered by the Bill is supervised in one form or another by a supervisory authority. It is, therefore, hard to see why the argument should carry any weight. I am not persuaded by that argument.

Even if one accepted the argument, there is one peculiarity about the way in which the new provision is drafted. The list of exempted money market institutions is entirely within the discretion of the Bank of England, subject to the Treasury's approval. That is a peculiar feature in a Bill sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry. A major hole, or vacuum, has suddenly appeared in the Bill, the dimensions of which are in the hands of the Bank of England and the Treasury.

On many occasions the Minister has argued effectively that his objective is to remove such regulations from the dead hand of the Treasury. That was the argument before making the Securities and Investments Board a private body. The suggestion that it should be a public body brought forth the argument that—horror of horrors—its budget and resources would be under the control of the Treasury. I am not particularly persuaded by that argument, but it seems to be the only argument that the Government can advance on that point. If the Treasury's role is so inimical to what the Department of Trade and Industry wants to achieve, how can the Minister, apparently without demur, stand at that Dispatch Box and say that, with Treasury approval, the Bank of England can remove wholesale a vast chunk of investment activity from the Bill's purview? Do we not have yet another example —and there may be others—of the Treasury having muscled in and outgunned the Department of Trade and Industry? Is the Minister happy with that?

7.30 pm

Mr. Tim Smith: The transactions that will be subject to these arrangements appear to be listed in the new schedule to come after schedule 3. I am not sure whether that schedule can be altered by the Bank of England without further authority. Was the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) saying that the schedule could be changed on the say-so of the Bank of England? If so, I share his concern.

Moreover, the distinction between debt and equity is not as clear as it was. It is now possible to issue an instrument that begins as straightforward debt but which, because it has conversion rights, can end up being straightforward equity. I am not sure how these arrangements deal with that. An instrument that started off as a money market instrument would end up as a security which should be regulated by the Bill.

Mr. Bermingham: I support what the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) has said. There are so many converted and new types of stock coming on to the market which change their shape and format over a period of time that one wonders what is being covered by what.

Who in the Treasury will authorise the Bankof England altering the list rather than schedule 3 itself? It seems to be rather like one's left hand shaking one's right hand to congratulate it on what one has done. If there is no regulation, one begins to wonder what is going on. Is there an ongoing battle with the dead hand of the Treasury crawling once more from its grave to throttle our institutions?

I thought that we had been promised that all that would go with this new, wonderful set of securities regulations. But perhaps I am once again being a little cynical in thinking that the words that first accompanied this Bill at the Dispatch Box will not be those that will be uttered at the end of its passage.

[Mr. Bermingham]

I am making a serious point. Who at the Treasury will control? How will there be any accountability when the Treasury authorises the bank? Who controls the bank? The answer is the Treasury.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) uncharacteristically misconstrued the arguments that I have been advancing on another issue. I am certain that I never used the phrase "the dead hand of the Treasury", although I drew the attention of the House, in another context, to the importance of ensuring that the regulatory structure set up by the Bill is free from the public sector financial constraints that would have been a feature of the statutory system that is so beloved by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends.

I do not accept that there is a hole in the regulation or a vacuum. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman recognised the good sense of taking these wholesale instruments out of the regulatory regime of the legislation. These amendments seek to move the dividing line between the areas regulated by the Bank of England and those regulated by the Bill. The principle behind the move is widely supported. The dividing line is somewhat pragmatic, and no doubt people will have their views about the details, and things will change. That is why amendment No. 57 adds a new provision to those listed in clause 43 in order to ensure that amendments can be made by order if they prove necessary.

But those amendments to the list of instruments now found in the new schedule are to be made by the Secretary of State and not by the Bank of England or the Treasury. The Treasury's role is in approving criteria for admission to, and removal from, the bank's list of institutions—not of instruments. It is important that the Treasury should have that role, because it ensures proper accountability to the Government and Parliament in that regard. Therefore, we are talking about a sensible distinction in recognising the reality of the distinctions to be made between the wholesale money markets and those areas that more properly come within the ambit of the Bill. The changes reflect that distinction.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 41

APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES

Lords amendment: No.42, in page 27, line 18 leave out "subsection (4)" and insert "subsections (4) and (4A)".

Read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following Lords amendments:

No. 43, in page 27, line 19, after "on" insert "the whole or part of".

No. 44, in page 27, leave out lines 21 and 22 and insert "writing and the investment business carried on by an appointed representative as such is the investment business for which his principal has accepted responsibility".

No. 45, in page 27, line 28, leave out "authorised".

No. 46, in page 27, line 28, leave out "or".

No. 47, in page 27, line 32, leave out "authorised".

No. 48, in page 27, line 32, at end insert

"; or

(c) giving advice as to the sale of investments issued by his principal or as to the exercise of rights conferred by an investment whether or not issued as aforesaid."

No. 49, in page 27, line 36, leave out "authorised".

No. 50, in page 27, line 39, leave out "authorised".

No. 51, in page 27, line 40, at end insert—

"(4A) If the contract between an appointed representative and his principal does not prohibit the representative from giving advice about entering into investment agreements with persons other than his principal it must make provision for enabling the principal either to impose such a prohibition or to restrict the kinds of advice which the representative may give by reference to the kinds of investment in relation to which or the persons with whom the representative may advise that investment agreements should be made."

No. 52, in page 28, line 1, leave out subsection (5).

No. 53, in page 28, line 9, after "done" insert "or omitted".

No. 54, in page 28, line 12, leave out from "with" to end of line 15 and insert—

"*(a)* any provision contained in or made under this Act; or

(b) any rules of a recognised self-regulating organisation or recognised professional body,

anything which a person who at the material time is or was an appointed representative of the authorised person has said, done, or omitted as respects investment business for which the authorised person has accepted responsibility shall be treated as having been said, done or omitted by the authorised person.

(7A) Nothing in subsection (7) above shall cause the knowledge or intentions of an appointed representative to be attributed to his principal for the purpose of determining whether the principal has committed a criminal offence unless in all the circumstances it is reasonable for them to be attributed to him.

(8) In this Act "investment agreement" means any agreement the making or performance of which by either party constitutes an activity which falls within any paragraph of Part II of Schedule 1 to this Act or would do so apart from Parts III and IV of that Schedule."

No. 112, in clause 59, page 46, line 5, after "person" insert

"or, except in the case of the power conferred by section 60 below, any appointed representative of his"

No. 114, in page 46, line 27, leave out "a person" and insert "*(a)* an authorised person"

No. 115, in page 46, line 28, leave out "*(a)*".

No. 117, in page 46, line 30, leave out "*(b)*".

No. 118, in page 46, line 32, at end insert

"or

(b) an appointed representative whose principal or, in the case of such a representative with more than one principal, each of whose principals is a member of such an organisation or body and is subject to the rules of such an organisation or body in carrying on the investment business in respect of which his principal or each of his principals has accepted responsibility for his activities;".

No. 119, in page 46, line 36, leave out

"or body of which he is a member"

and insert

"of which he or, in the case of an appointed representative, any of his principals is a member or any such body by which he or, as the case may be, any of his principals is certified".

No. 120, in clause 61, page 47, line 8, after "person" insert "or appointed representative".

No. 121, in page 47, line 9, after "person" insert "or, as the case may be, representative"

No. 122, in clause 62, page 47, line 16, after "person" insert "or appointed representative"

No. 123, in page 47, line 18, at end insert "or appointed representative"

No. 124, in page 47, line 22, after "person" insert

"or, as the case may be, appointed representative".

No. 125, in clause 63, page 47, line 33, after "person" insert "or appointed representative"

No. 126, in page 47, line 35, after "person" insert "or, as the case may be, appointed representative"

No. 379, in clause 171, page 139, line 39, at end insert—

"*(d)* in the case of an appointed representative, be given to or served on his principal."

No. 385, in clause 173, page 141, line 33, leave out "5(7)" and insert "41(8)".

No. 479, in schedule 9, page 178, line 17, leave out "agreement to acquire or dispose of an investment"

and insert—

"investment agreement".

No. 499, in page 180, line 35, at end insert—

"or the appointed representative of such a society"

No. 500, in page 180, line 39, after "society" insert "or such a representative".

No. 502, in page 181, line 10, leave out from "relation" to "except" and insert—

"*(a)* to a member society which is subject to the rules of a recognised self-regulating organisation for friendly societies in carrying on all the investment business carried on by it; or

(b) to an appointed representative of a member society if that member society, and each other member society which is his principal, is subject to the rules of such an organisation in carrying on the investment business in respect of which it has accepted responsibility for his activities;".

No. 503, in page 181, line 13, after "society" insert "or appointed representative".

No. 504, in page 181, line 14, leave out "it is a member society"

and insert—

"the society or, as the case may be, the society which is the representative's principal is a member society".

Mr. Butterfill: Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend the Minister can explain the effect of the rather complicated set of amendments to clause 41. How do they affect the principles of polarisation which we discussed in detail in Committee? Numerous representations have been made to us, particularly by the clearing banks.

Mr. Howard: These amendments are largely technical and correct some defects in the regime of the Bill for appointed representatives. Perhaps the two most important effects of the amendments are to extend the definition of the business that an appointed representative may carry on and—I come to the point that may have given rise to my hon. Friend's concern—to ensure that an appointed representative is allowed to have a number of principals.

The reason behind the provision permitting an appointed representative to have more than one principal relates to the problems created for insurance companies by the fact that section 16 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 prohibits them from carrying on any activity otherwise than in connection with, or for the purposes of, their insurance business.

It follows that an insurance company could not lawfully accept responsibility for an appointed representative when he was selling non-insurance products, such as unit trusts offered by a unit trust company in the same group. It is undesirable that an insurance company's appointed representative should not be able to sell other products offered by companies in the same group if the contract between the company and the representative permits it. The amendments therefore make it possible for a principal to be able to accept responsibility for part of his representative's activities. But this should not prevent polarisation being instituted by a designated agency.

Rules can be made under clause 45(2) *(f)* restricting the sort of principals a particular appointed representative may have. Indeed, the change would facilitate what the SIB has proposed in this area. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) will know, it has always envisaged that an appointed representative should be restricted to selling not just the products of a single company but the products of a single company or group. The amendments do nothing to make it more difficult for rules to that effect to be promulgated. Indeed, they facilitate that.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): The House will be grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for his elucidation of the purpose behind the amendments. But the amendments are a little more than technical, and raise an issue which was the subject of an important debate both in Committee and on Report. Many hon. Members have taken an interest in this subject. We are enlarging, in a desirable way, the range of investment insurance products that an authorised representative can offer to members of the investing public.

Therefore, in yet another material way we are perhaps granting a facility, privilege, freedom or authorised right to that group of people who are competing against independent intermediaries in the offering of a variety of different products. It may be that in the former case we are talking about a variety of insurance or investment products within a group of companies, offered through a range of subsidiaries. That is wholly desirable. I am sure that this does not in any way undermine the principle of polarisation.

What progress has been made to ensure that the provision of these services will be free and fair and that many of the uncertainties which independent intermediaries fear would arise as a result of this proposal of polarisation will not occur? I am referring, in particular, to a commission agreement. Although that is not directly relevant to the technical import of these amendments, it is relevant because the question of polarisation and what authorised representatives, as well as independent intermediaries, are allowed to do must be considered together.

Before we seek to ratify what their Lordships did in the other place, I wish to know what progress has been made with regard to the commission agreement. May we reassure the many enterprising companies and individuals who are involved as independent intermediaries and who provide these investment services? We hear varying tales of the extent to which these parties will be subject to the commission agreement and will be protected by the arrangements envisaged. I should be grateful for the Minister's comments on this.

Mr. Gould: I support the general remarks made by the hon. Members for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill).

Is it possible for the Minister to tell us what is likely to emerge in terms of commission agreements, disclosure of charges and so on about which there has been a great deal of speculation and press comment? That is one important issue. An equally important, related issue is the alarm which many of us felt at the strong indications from the

[Mr. Gould]

other place that a great deal of pressure was being put on the Government to unravel—that is how I see it—the whole structure which the Standing Committee had worked hard to establish.

An important plank of that work was the principle of polarisation. If, at any time, the Government were tempted to accede to pressure put upon them, presumably by the clearing banks, and were in some way to weaken or modify the principle of polarisation, the whole structure of the regulation of the sale of life insurance would come to pieces. I was encouraged by what happened in the other place and I congratulate the Government on standing firm on this point.

The Minister is obliged to answer for the Securities and Investments Board. The draft rules and activities of the SIB are not easily accessible from debates and I wonder whether the Minister can give us a further assurance, if that is possible, that the SIB is intent upon adhering, in its rules, to the principle of polarisation. I seek an assurance that, even at this late stage, the principle of polarisation will not be lost sight of in the SIB's rules.

Mr. Howard: The House will be aware, as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, that the Government have not acceded to any suggestion for any changes in legislation which would eat away at the principle of polarisation. During the course of many debates in Committee I have made my views clear on the desirability of the general terms of polarisation.

The SIB, in the course of its preparation for application for designation, must draw up its own rules governing this topic. It is for the SIB to consider whether there is any scope for considering how those rules can apply to particular institutions. That is a matter for the designated agency and it is one which the Secretary of State will wish to take into account when he decides whether those rules are appropriate and sufficient to enable him to designate the agency.

Mr. Ashdown: I am especially glad to have heard the Minister's last few sentence because this was a matter that the Government were pressed upon, not least by my colleagues in another place, who take a different view on polarisation.

I expressed that view in relation to insurance agents and tied and independent intermediaries. At the end of that debate—I recall that the amendment was withdrawn—the Government conceded that there was a considerable amount of discussion yet to take place in relation to the clearing banks. On the basis of that assurance, my colleagues and indeed Conservative Members of the other place who had raised objections withdrew their amendments. Will the Minister confirm that the matter is still open for discussion?

7.45 pm

Mr. Howard: This is not a discussion in which the Government are taking part. It is a discussion between the SIB and those institutions which are affected. Clearly the SIB is having a number of discussions with interested parties and it is right that it should do so.

It is the responsibility of the SIB to draw up its rules and it is right and proper that, in the course of that task, it should engage in discussions. The Government's role begins when the SIB makes its application for designation. It would be wrong and quite inappropriate for me to be drawn into detailed questions, which inevitably would form the basis of detailed rules drawn up by the SIB.

Mr. Gould: Are we right in concluding from the Minister's earlier remarks that the shape and direction of the rules in relation to polarisation is something in which the Secretary of State, and indeed the Under-Secretary of State, will take a close interest?

I think it is well accepted that the Minister and the SIB talk from time to time and that they will indeed discuss polarisation. Are we right to conclude that, in the course of those conversations, the Minister will bear in mind the decision—jointly arrived at by the Standing Committee—in respect of the importance of polarisation?

Mr. Howard: I have already said that I have not departed from the views I expressed in Standing Committee. The detailed application of the principle of polarisation in particular circumstances must be a matter for the SIB. I do not propose to be drawn any further on the matter this evening.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I understand that and, of course, it would be quite wrong of me to press my hon. Friend on detailed points.

When the Secretary of State comes to consider designated agencies, will he be satisfied with a set of rules, contemplated by the agency, by which a conglomerate financial institution would hold itself out as offering objective investment advice to the small investor and yet at the same time be marketing to that small investor its in-house products?

Mr. Howard: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. When the time for designation arrives the Secretary of State will certainly pay close attention to such rules.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) asked about the likelihood of a commission agreement. He will appreciate that it is not within my power to guarantee that there will be such an agreement, although the signs suggest this. Ever since the publication, in January 1985, of the White Paper on financial services in the United Kingdom the Government have made their position clear. The Government believe that commissions received by independent intermediaries from insurance companies should be disclosed—either by disclosure of the commission received or in accordance with the proposition that the remuneration is within the terms of a voluntary, industry-wide agreement. Such an agreement would need to be examined in relation to its impact on competition. Arrangements would have to be made to provide investors with ready access to details of the agreement. The Government envisage that there might be such an agreement.

The Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, which is seeking to become the recognised self-regulating organisation for life offices and unit trusts, is strongly committed to the idea of a commissions agreement. It is already working on the form of such an agreement involving consumer and intermediary interests in the work and I think that those indications provide a strong answer to the question posed by my hon. Friend as to the likelihood of such an agreement.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 42

MISCELLANEOUS EXEMPTIONS

Lords amendment: No. 55, in page 29, line 13, leave out "222 of the Insolvency Act 1985"
and insert
"399 of the Insolvency Act 1986"

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 56, in page 29, line 16, at end insert—

"(2) Where a bankruptcy order is made in respect of an authorised person or of a person whose authorisation is suspended under section 27 above or who is the subject of a direction under section 32(1)*(b)* above or a winding-up order is made in respect of a partnership which is such a person, the trustee in bankruptcy or liquidator acting in his capacity as such is an exempted person but—

(a) sections 45 to 66 below and, so far as relevant to any of those provisions, Chapter IX of this Part of this Act; and

(b) sections 91, 92 and 93 below.

shall apply to him to the same extent as they applied to the bankrupt or partnership and, if the bankrupt or partnership was subject to the rules of a recognised self-regulating organisation or recognised professional body, he shall himself also be subject to those rules.

(3) In the application of subsection (2) above to Scotland—

(a) for the reference to a bankruptcy order being made in respect of a person there shall be substituted a reference to the estate of that person being sequestrated;

(b) the reference to a winding up order in respect of a partnership is a reference to such an order made under section *(Power to petition for winding-up orders)* below;

(c) for the reference to the trustee in bankruptcy there shall be substituted a reference to the interim trustee or permanent trustee within the meaning of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985; and

(d) for the references to the bankrupt there shall be substituted references to the debtor.

(4) In the application of subsection (2) above to Northern Ireland for the reference to a bankruptcy order there shall be substituted a reference to an order of adjudication of bankruptcy and the reference to a trustee in bankruptcy shall include a reference to an assignee in bankruptcy."

No. 132, after clause 66 insert the following new clause—

"CHAPTER VIA

WINDING UP AND ADMINISTRATION ORDERS

Power to petition for winding up orders

(1) On a petition presented by the Secretary of State by virtue of this section, the court having jurisdiction under the Insolvency Act 1986 may wind up an authorised person or appointed representative to whom this subsection applies if—

(a) the person is unable to pay his debts within the meaning of section 123 or, as the case may be, section 221 of that Act; or

(b) the court is of the opinion that it is just and equitable that the person should be wound up.

(2) Subsection (1) above applies to any authorised person, any person whose authorisation is suspended under section 27 above or who is the subject of a direction under section 32(1)*(b)* above or any person or appointed representative who is—

(a) a company within the meaning of section 735 of the Companies Act 1985;

(b) an unregistered company within the meaning of section 220 of the Insolvency Act 1986;

(c) an overseas company within the meaning of section 744 of the Companies Act 1985; or

(d) a partnership.

(3) For the purposes of a petition under subsection (1) above a person who defaults in an obligation to pay any sum due and payable under any investment agreement shall be deemed to be unable to pay his debts.

(4) Where a petition is presented under subsection (1) above for the winding up of a partnership on the ground mentioned in paragraph *(b)* of subsection (1) above or, in Scotland, on a ground mentioned in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* of that subsection, the court shall have jurisdiction and the Insolvency Act 1986 shall have effect as if the partnership were an unregistered company within the meaning of section 220 of that Act.

(5) The Secretary of State shall not present a petition under subsection (1) above for the winding up of any person who is an authorised person by virtue of membership of a recognised self-regulating organisation or certification by a recognised professional body and is subject to the rules of the organisation or body in the carrying on of all investment business carried on by him, unless that organisation or body has consented to his doing so."

No. 133, after clause 66, insert the following new clause—

"*Winding up orders: Northern Ireland.*

.—(1) On a petition presented by the Secretary of State by virtue of this section, the High Court in Northern Ireland may wind up an authorised person or appointed representative to whom this subsection applies if—

(a) the person is unable to pay his debts within the meaning of Article 480 or, as the case may be, Article 616 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986; or

(b) the court is of the opinion that it is just and equitable that the person should be wound up.

(2) Subsection (1) above applies to any authorised person, any person whose authorisation is suspended under section 27 above or who is the subject of a direction under section 32(1) *(b)* above or any appointed representative who is—

(a) a company within the meaning of Article 3 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986;

(b) an unregistered company within the meaning of Article 615 of that Order; or

(c) a Part XXIII company within the meaning of Article 2 of that Order; or

(d) a partnership.

(3) For the purposes of a petition under subsection (1) above a person who defaults in an obligation to pay any sum due and payable under any investment agreement shall be deemed to be unable to pay his debts.

(4) Where a petition is presented under subsection (1) above for the winding up of a partnership on the ground mentioned in paragraph *(b)* of subsection (1) above, the High Court in Northern Ireland shall have jurisdiction and the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 shall have effect as if the partnership were an unregistered company within the meaning of Article 615 of that Order.

(5) The Secretary of State shall not present a petition under subsection (1) above for the winding up of any person who is an authorised person by virtue of membership of a recognised self-regulating organisation or certification by a recognised professional body and is subject to the rules of the organisation or body in the carrying on of all investment business carried on by him, unless that organisation or body has consented to his doing so."

No. 134, after clause 66, insert the following new clause—

("*Power to petition for administration orders.*

.A petition may be presented under section 9 of the Insolvency Act 1986 (applications for administration orders) in relation to a company to which section 8 of that Act applies which is an authorised person, a person whose authorisation is suspended under section 27 above or who is the subject of a direction under section 32(1)*(b)* above or an appointed representative—

(a) in the case of an authorised person who is an authorised person by virtue of membership of a recognised self-regulating organisation or certification by a recognised professional body, by that organisation or body; and

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

(b) in the case of an appointed representative or an authorised person who is not authorised as mentioned in paragraph *(a)* above or is so authorised but is not subject to the rules of the organisation or body in question in the carrying on of all investment business carried on by him, by the Secretary of State."

No. 189, in clause 96, page 76, line 16, at end insert —

"*(f)* section *(Communication by auditor with supervisory authorities)* (2) above;".

No. 331, in clause 150, page 119, line 13, leave out "3 of the Insolvency Act 1985")

and insert

"391 of the Insolvency Act 1986".

No. 377, after clause 165, insert the following new clause—

"*Power to petition for winding up or administration order on information obtained under Act 1985 c.6*

.—(1) In section 440 of the Companies Act 1985—

(a) after the words "section 437" there shall be inserted the words "above or section 81 of the Financial Services Act 1986; and

(b) after the words "448 below" there shall be inserted the words "or section 92 of that Act".

(2) In section 8 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986—

(a) after the words "the Companies Act" there shall be inserted the words "or section 81 or 147 of the Financial Services Act 1986"; and

(b) for that words "the Act" there shall be substituted the words "the Companies Act or section 92 of the Financial Services Act 1986".

(3) In Article 433 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986—

(a) after the words "Article 430" there shall be inserted the words "or section 81 of the Financial Services Act 1986"; and

(b) after the word "441" there shall be inserted the words "or section 92 of that Act"."

No. 446, in schedule 8, page 168, line 5, at end insert—

"( ) The powers conferred by section *[Power to petition for winding up orders]* of this Act shall not be exercisable in relation to a regulated insurance company."

No. 527, in schedule 9, page 199, line 10, leave out "1985" and insert

"1986, the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986".

No. 528, in page 199, line 41, leave out

"3 of the Insolvency Act 1985"

and insert—

"391 of the Insolvency Act 1986".

Mr. Howard: This group of amendments concerns the position of authorised businesses which become insolvent. The first amendment, to clause 42, concerns a bankruptcy order or winding-up order relating to an authorised person who operates as a sole trader or partnership. In these circumstances, the authorisation to carry on investment business under which that firm has operated will not be transferable with the business to the trustee in bankruptcy or liquidator appointed by the court. As the trustee will already have satisfied the "fit and proper" test imposed by the Insolvency Act 1986 to qualify as an insolvency practitioner, an exemption from any authorisation requirement in these limited circumstances is reasonable.

Amendments in this group also enable the Secretary of State or agency to petition the court for the winding-up of an authorised person which is a company or partnership, if it cannot pay its debts or if the court considers that it is just and equitable to do so.

Provision is also made to enable any regulator to petition the court for appointment of an administrator under the Insolvency Act 1986 to take over the affairs of an authorised business which is a company. The court will have to be satisfied that the criteria set out in the Insolvency Act 1986 for the appointment of an administrator are fulfilled before it grants such an application.

The new clause after clause 165 contains technical amendments to allow information obtained under powers given in this Bill to be used in the exercise of powers conferred by the Companies Act.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 45

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS RULES

Lords amendment: No. 61, in page 31, leave out lines 41 to 44 and insert—

"*(i)* as to the circumstances and manner in which and the time when or the period during which action may be taken for the purpose of stabilising the price of investments of any specified description;".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments: No. 63, in page 32, line 23, leave out subsection (6).

No. 64, in page 32, line 34, leave out from first "of" to end of line 37 and insert

"section 44 above.

(6A) Section 44(2) above shall not be regarded as contravened by anything done for the purpose of stabilising the price of investments if it is done in conformity with rules made under this section and—

(a) in respect of investments which fall within any of paragraphs 1 to 5 of Schedule 1 to this Act and are specified by the rules; and

(b) during such period before or after the issue of those investments as is specified by the rules.

(6B) The Secretary of State may by order amend subsection (6A) above—

(a) by restricting or extending the kinds of investment to which it applies;

(b) by restricting it so as to apply only in relation to the issue of investments in specified circumstances or by extending it, in respect of investments of any kind specified in the order, so as to apply to things done during a specified period before or after events other than the issue of those investments.

(6C) No order shall be made under subsection (6B) above unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament."

No. 186, in clause 96, page 76, line 13, at end insert—

"*(bb)* section 45 (6B);"

No 312, in clause 145 page 112, line 36, leave out from beginning to end of line 2 on page 113 and insert—

"*Price stabilisation.*

6. No provision of section 1, 2, 4 or 5 prohibits an individual from doing anything for the purpose of stabilising the price of securities if it is done in conformity with rules made under section 45 of the Financial Services Act 1986 and —

(a) in respect of securities which fall within any of paragraphs 1 to 5 of Schedule 1 to that Act and are specified by the rules; and

(b) during such period before or after the issue of those securities as is specified by the rules.

(2) Any order under subsection (6B) of section 45 of that Act shall apply also in relation to subsection (1) of this section."

No 440, in schedule 6 page 161, line 11, at end insert—

"7A. Rules made under section 45 of this Act regulating action for the purpose of stabilising the price of investments must make proper provision for ensuring that where action is or is to be taken in conformity with the rules adequate arrangements exist for making known that the price of the investments in respect of which the action is or is to be taken (and, where relevant, of any other investments) may be affected by that action and the period during which it may be affected; and where a transaction is or is to be entered into during a period when it is known that the price of the investment to which it relates may be affected by any such action the information referred to in paragraph 7 above includes information to that effect".

No. 475, in schedule 9 page 178, line 7, leave out from beginning to "in" in line 8 and insert

"Section 46 of this Act shall apply in relation to rules under this paragraph as it applies".

No. 476, in page 178, line 10, leave out "references"and insert "reference". No. 477, in page 178, line 11, leave out "references" and insert "a reference". No. 478, in page 178, line 13, leave out "of section 46".

Mr. Howard: These amendments are the result of extensive discussions with a number of interested parties, including the International Securities Regulatory Organisation. It was argued in those discussions that the original exemption from the market manipulation offence for stabilisation, which was confined to action intended to stabilise the market price of international bonds in the period before or during an issue of such bonds, was too narrowly drawn. It was put to us that there is an increasing market in international equities and if stabilisation techniques accepted elsewhere in respect of such issues were not permitted in the United Kingdom, we would be put at a considerable competitive disadvantage.

At a late stage, a further argument was advanced in another place that stabilisation should be permitted in circumstances unconnected with new issues, for instance, the sale or dispersal of a large, existing shareholding. The Government have accepted the case for extending to the stabilisation of equities the exemption from the market manipulation offence currently shown in clause 45(7) provided it is in conformity with rules made under that clause. I stress that last qualification. As elsewhere in the Bill, it is the rules themselves which will set out the detailed requirements for protecting investors. In extending the provisions to equities, it has been necessary to look again at the protections available to ordinary investors. Given the increasingly international nature of the securities market, it does not seem practicable, once we include equities, to identify those securities which are distinctively international or likely to be traded on a "professional only" basis. Instead, we specifically provide that the rules to be made under clause 45 should provide that there is adequate disclosure to investors of the fact that the price of investments in which they may be dealing may be affected by stabilisation. Amendment No. 440 introduces a new principle into schedule 6 to make this point clear.

I turn now to the argument that stabilisation should be permitted in circumstances quite unrelated to the issue of investments. This argument was advanced at a very late stage. I have no wish to close the door on such arguments if they prove to be well-founded, but equally I believe we should be very careful before we rush to legislative conclusions in what has proved a very complex and technical area. I have thought it right, therefore, that we should meet this point by introducing the possibility of changing both the range of investments which may be stabilised without falling foul of clause 44(2) and the circumstances in which such stabilisation may take place provided that it is in conformity with the rules. This is the effect of subsections (6B) and (6C) of amendment No. 64. The order-making power will be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure and will not be delegatable to a designated agency.

The remaining amendments are consequential. Amendment No. 312 to clause 145 reflects the fact that we have always intended that where stabilisation is permitted for the purpose of clause 44(2) it should also be exempt from the relevant provisions of the insider dealing legislation. Amendments Nos. 475 to 478 to schedule 9 stem from the fact that the defence against being found to have contravened clause 44(2) is available to anyone who acts in conformity with the rules made under clause 45 governing matters within the scope of the exemption in the new subsection 45(6A). The defence is not confined to authorised persons who are subject to clause 45 rules. This would include registered friendly societies. Separate provision in schedule 9 is therefore unnecessary and the amendments to that schedule reflect that.

Mr. Gould: The Minister will have some sympathy with me when I say that this is one of the most difficult areas in the Bill. It is made more difficult by the fact, as he conceded, that some of the pressure for change has come late in the day, certainly long since we last had the opportunity to consider this matter.

The problem as I see it — I speak as a layman as these matters are esoteric by most people's standards— is that the thrust and object of the Bill is to provide a substantial level of investor protection. One of the most important provisions to that effect is that which makes a criminal offence of market manipulation. It is one of the cardinal principles and planks of the Bill that there is a clearly defined criminal offence so that the ordinary person operating in the ordinary market who attempts to mislead other operators as to the true market price of an investment will commit an offence.

There are also, however, apparently powerful arguments in exactly the opposite direction. They state that in the Eurobond market — although we now see the argument being extended to international securities of all sorts, including equities, and from new issues to dealings in a secondary market of such equities—far from being a criminal offence, manipulation is to be authorised and welcomed as an essential feature of the proper operation of those markets. The fact that it is called market stabilisation in that context is mere labelling. It is most unsatisfactory that what is a criminal offence in one market should be authorised and welcomed in another. I am sure that the Minister must have wrestled long and hard with some of those problems over the past few weeks and months.

I had the benefit of a brief from ISRO on this matter and I understand that the case made is a very familiar one in so many regulatory matters. If the regulations are thought to be excessively rigid or inappropriate, then the threat is that the business being done will go elsewhere. We are essentially describing an offshore market in many respects. There is no particular reason, although I sometimes think that the reasons are stronger than people believe why the business should be done in London. Therefore, the argument is that if what is universally regarded in those markets as acceptable practice is

[Mr. Gould]

outlawed by the British regulatory regime, business will simply go elsewhere. That would be a pity. We derive benefit from having that market located in London. If the business is to be done, let it be done in London. If it is not done here we lose foreign exchange earnings, a certain amount of employment, and so on.

I understand the Minister's dilemma. However, the problem is that we are confronted with permissive provisions which cast the ultimate responsibility for resolving the dilemma upon the body which makes the rules. We have the benefit of having seen some draft rules on the question, and the Securities and Investments Board has done an admirable job in trying to establish what safeguards and criteria ought to apply in this difficult area.

8 pm

Nevertheless, it is still of considerable concern that the boundaries of the exemption are pretty unclear. We know that the distinction between an international market and a domestic market is not likely to remain fixed or concrete; it will change over time. The whole thrust of what is happening in the City of London right now is to break down that distinction substantially. For example, the merger between the SROs and the stock exchange shows that the old distinctions which used to be drawn between the domestic market and the international market in securities and equities is simply no longer likely to be either permanent or meaningful.

The question facing the Minister is that, given that he accepts the case for stabilisation in one area while still regarding market manipulation in another area as a criminal offence, how will he prevent the one area leaking into the other? Where is his sticking point? He has apparently already gone a long way towards conceding that stabilisation should be permitted in the secondary market in international securities. If that is the case, we are perilously close——

Mr. Howard: No.

Mr. Gould: The hon. and learned Gentleman says no, but there is provision in the Bill which makes it possible for rules to provide for that. Where are we to stop? The ordinary investor will want to participate in such a secondary market in international equities and that is largely the purpose of providing such a market. The notion that one can always rely on the concept of the experienced or business investor being exclusively engaged in this market is misleading.

There are further, more technical problems which are equally difficult to resolve. For example, if the international syndicates which have underwritten a new issue, or even a secondary issue—a large volume of shares are dealt in the secondary market—stabilise the market in accordance with the rules but do so a little more enthusiastically than should really be permitted by the rules, in other words, if in addition to the permitted stabilisation there is in the same transaction or series of transactions, in the same mopping up by the underwriters of spare shares, a further element of what might in other terms be regarded as market manipulation, how will that distinction be made? Where will the limit be applied as to the degree of stabilisation permitted? How will it be identified in the course of the one series of transactions in respect of the same issue of securities?

These are immensely difficult problems. I confess that I do not have a solution to them, but then I am not the Minister. The Minister is obliged to offer some guidance to the House as to how these matters are to be resolved. At present, one of the most important principles underlying the Bill is in danger of substantial erosion. I want to be clear as to where the limits of that erosion will be.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has raised legitimate issues of concern. The line between what would be legitimate stabilisation and what would be misleading the market is an extremely fine and difficult one to draw. I can well understand why my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State has, I believe, only reluctantly been persuaded to accept that stabilisation should be legitimised in the way that he contemplates.

His opening remarks helped me to clarify what was in his mind. I had been a little concerned that the provision for extending the categories of transactions in which stabilisation would be legitimate by means of affirmative resolution of both Houses was an extraordinarily cumbersome one if it was to be applied in active market conditions. It clearly would not work. If I have interpreted him correctly, he is merely giving the Government time to consider further what categories of transactions should be so legitimised.

It will be impossible to avoid extending the categories to include secondary offerings. A signal case which is likely to arise before long will be the Government's offer of a further tranche of its holding of British Petroleum shares. As I understand it, under the Bill as amended stabilisation would not be permitted in the instance of such an offer. Yet I would have thought that that was typical of the sort of case of secondary offering where stabilisation would clearly be necessary to ensure orderly market conditions. We should not restrict ourselves to contemplating that only offerings of Government shareholdings would create such a situation. One can also imagine, perfectly respectably and properly, that a large private shareholding might be brought on to the market and that it would be in the interests of investor protection to have some stabilisation. Therefore, the class of categories covered will have to be extended.

This is quintessentially the sort of matter that ought to be determined by the Securities and Investments Board. I fully concur with the hon. Member for Dagenham in recognising how extremely difficult and technical it will be to make the judgments, and that it will be a problem to provide regulatory provisions to meet specific circumstances. However, it cannot be avoided, and surely the Bill's strategy is to ensure a flexible and highly competent regulatory authority which can adapt to altering market circumstances of the kind that my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State has recognised.

Mr. Bermingham: In this series of amendments we have reached the heart of what is going on in the Bill. Whereas we had been going to pay lip service to investor protection, in fact we shall no longer do anything of the sort. When one starts to ask oneself certain questions about the proposals contained in these clauses, one begins to get a series of answers which are not very nice.

For example, who will decide what is or is not a domestic or international share, bond or security? When

does the one change to the other? Who will make the decisions? Will there be someone standing at arm's length and looking in, or will it pass to the same old body which deals in those matters? Of course, as the Bill stands it will be done by people within the industry.

Who will decide what is manipulation and what is merely stabilisation? The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) made a good point with regard to the placing of a large shareholding, perhaps in a fairly small company, which is in the hands of a single person and if put in its entirety on the market at any given moment will automatically depress the price. That follows as night follows day. Who will decide such cases? Will it be someone at arm's length, or someone who is actually involved in making the markets? Again, the answer falls in the latter category, self-regulation becomes self-evaluation and protection is denied.

The Bill then begins to show many areas for grave worry. Even after all these amendments, the Government have not thought things through. For months, if not years, there has been pressure and comment from people within the City and elsewhere that there was much to learn from the Securities Exchange Commission across the Atlantic. But the Government would have none of that. They wanted self-regulation and they placed their offering upon the altar of that god.

The small investor will ultimately pay because many of these deals will take place in in-house arrangements, where both buyer and seller, or trader on behalf of buyer and seller, are within the same building and the same company. We talk as though investors will somehow be protected by the mythical Chinese walls, but we have had enough experience of what can go wrong in the City in the past few years. For instance, we all know that insider dealing goes on. It is disapproved of, rarely if ever investigated, and even less frequently prosecuted. Yet it it criminal and investors suffer—and it is never the big boys, always the little people.

What does the Minister intend to do about that? He has done nothing in the past. At least under the American system investigations are going on and lawyers and other persons involved are being prosecuted and the money recovered. What is happening in the City of London? The Minister knows as well as I do that the answer is nothing. No one is prosecuted and investors suffer. How great a charter is there for the crooks and the charlatans whom no one wants in the City because they are poison to the whole system? The amendments do naught to tackle the cancer there.

I ask the Minister one last time: Will the Government ever listen to anyone? Will they not listen to the experts in America and elsewhere? Will they not look again at that aspect? At the end of the day it will be the small investor who pays the price for paper-thin walls that do not hold secrets, for manipulation that is classically called stabilisation, and for the creation of international markets when they are really domestic markets. It will be the small shareholder, the small investor, who will ultimately lose because the protection is not there.

Mr. Nelson: The amendments are a good example of where the Government have listened to people and where they have shown great ability to come to terms with an exceedingly complex problem. The amendments are welcome. They respond in exactly the right way and strike exactly the right balance between the need to protect investors and the need to allow important business to be retained in the City of London and our economy. I pay tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and those others who have been involved in drafting the legislation.

We should emphasise the importance of this market to our economy and to financial services in particular. Whether hon. Members like it or not, the reality is that such is the nature of the international securities business that operators and market makers within that area will go elsewhere if they find the rules here inhibiting. The business will be done on behalf of investors in Britain and elsewhere outside Britain if rules and regulations impinge improperly and in a prejudicial way on the market.

Although it is difficult to define them, there are material differences between what might loosely be called the domestic and international securities markets which justify the differential treatment which the amendments seek to achieve. First, the lines of stock involved in the international securities market are considerably larger than those involved in the domestic market. Secondly, the number of market makers and dealers within that market is much smaller than is the case with the domestic securities market. There are far fewer participants even if the eventual beneficial ownership of lines of stock ends up in a multiciplicity of hands or, indeed, in institutional or mutual funds, unit trusts or whatever.

The nature of the market, in terms of financial size, large lines of stock and small numbers of dealers, undoubtedly means that some of the procedures, whether they are called, somewhat euphemistically, stabilisation procedures, or whether they are called, somewhat ingloriously, market manipulation, arguably act in the interests of investor protection. It is through stability in the market that one can, in certain instances, in international securities dealings, shift large lines of stock and acquire them. It is a mutual technique used by the participants in those markets which we should not seek to outlaw. It would be against the interests of both our economy and investors to do so.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) asked who will scrutinise and monitor the situation. My understanding—I am open to correction—is that that will be the responsibility of the SROs and the SIB. We look to them, in their daily scrutiny of the markets and the operation of the stabilisation techniques, to ensure that the parameters of the legislation are not exceeded and that many of the detailed requirements of the amendments are complied with.

8.15 pm

For example, amendment No. 440 ensures that where action is to be taken in conformity with the rules adequate arrangements exist for making it known that the price of investments may be affected by that action and the period during which it may be affected. That is a material and proper piece of information made available which is a real attempt to overcome the difficulties which undoubtedly exist in defining the dichotomy between the domestic and international securities market. Communication, the provision of information and the clear setting out that there is less than a perfect market, and, necessarily, a situation where the client's interest will be dealt with at best is an important safeguard.

Mr. Gould: I fully understand the importance of the safeguard provided by the disclosure provisions, but why

[Mr. Gould]

should not a similar safeguard provide a similar regime in any securities market? Why should there still be such a substantial difference between the domestic market and the international market when, as I think he concedes, that distinction will be increasingly difficult to draw?

Mr. Nelson: It is common ground that we should seek to achieve as perfect, as efficient and as accurate a market as possible — a market where deals are done at best, where the market price is established by the forces of demand and supply in the simplest terms and where the provision and disclosure of information in conducting those deals and in striking the prices is done on an honourable and fair basis, not on a basis which seeks to mislead people about the market price or what might be the direction of the market in a particular stock, be it up or down. It is undisputed that that is the objective and that is in the interests of investors. That is what rules elsewhere in the legislation have sought to enhance.

In this specific instance I have argued that the matter is different because of the size of the lines of stock, which are of such magnitude and dealt with in isolation by a small number of dealers, say in London, which form a significant part of the international securities markets operations. But the technical market operations are materially different and if one is seeking to protect, say, the interests of a client of a major investment bank who wishes to sell or to buy into a large line of stock, such mechanisms are an essential means of ensuring that he is able either to sell all that line of stock without driving down the price substantially, or acquire it without, conversely, driving it up.

It can be argued in purely theoretical terms that that can be against the interests of the other side to the bargain, but such has been the experience over a period that the movement of stock generally tends to reflect fundamentally in those international markets rather more than does the short-term effect of large amounts of demand or supply that take place in a domestic market. In simple terms, a large line of stock in a domestic market, being sold or acquired, can materially affect the price in the short term, whereas in the international market it need not necessarily do so. One reason for that is the stabilisation processes that have been established by dealers.

I readily accept that this matter is difficult to explain other than in the most technical way, but the House should recognise that it happens because dealers on all sides of the bargains in the international securities market want it to happen and perceive it to be in their interests in dealing on behalf of others in enabling them to acquire large amounts of stock or to dispose of them.

I welcome these amendments. My hon. and learned Friend and the Department have tried hard to respond to the legitimate anxieties of those concerned. The House would be well advised to accept the Minister's advice.

Mr. Cash: I shall speak briefly and with special reference to the remarks of the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). The international securities market will be traded in. We must be involved in that and ensure that it is done effectively. But is there sufficient control over how that will be carried out? That takes one back immediately to the matter of the self-regulating organisations and how the market will be regulated through the control it exercises over those persons who are members of the SROs.

Some hon. Members may have had the opportunity to watch an extremely interesting programme, which lasted for about two and a half hours, called "Moneyspinners"——

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It was very boring.

Mr. Cash: The programme was extremely interesting, despite the remark made by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), in that it illustrated the expectation of predatory activities by some foreign-owned companies, especially Japanese companies. It seems clear that the sheer volume of money accumulated in their savings in Japan, if transferred to Britain, would, in the medium to long term, have a significant effect upon activities in the City of London. That is before we consider the activities of America and other overseas companies.

Referring to the remarks of the hon. Member for St. Helens, South, the real issue is whether the SROs will be able to control the activities of those companies which are operating from abroad as we would wish them to be controlled. The object of the Bill is to achieve sensible control over their activities. I have had, and continue to have, grave reservations about the conferring of legal immunity on the SROs, because, as I said on Report, there is no reason why it should be conferred. The right people must be appointed to the SROs.

In Committee I discussed this matter several times with the Minister. We have discussed the fit and proper person test many times and we have decided that it is possible to appoint the right people. I strongly request the Minister and the Securities and Investments Board to exert all the influence that they can to ensure that the right people are appointed to the SROs. That is the acid test.

I was delighted to hear—I should like the Minister to confirm this point — that, following an amendment which I tabled in Committee and further discussions on the matter, a significant number of independent persons will be appointed to the SROs. Ultimately, to avoid any suggestion of cosy clubs, it is essential that the people appointed to the SROs should be able to question the behaviour of their colleagues.

Mr. Bermingham: I agree with many of the points made by the hon. Gentleman. Looking back over the history of Lloyd's underwriting, the self-regulation at Lloyd's and the messes that have occurred involving Ian Posgate, Peter Cameron-Webb and others, does the hon. Gentleman agree that that should be an object lesson to us in the sort of person whom we appoint to the SROs? Unless we have the strength and independence of character to do that, people can look within from without and the securities industry may be in the position that Lloyd's was in some years ago.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman seizes upon a point with which I am familiar, in that some years ago I was asked to advise Lloyd's on self-regulation after Mr. Davison took over. In my memorandum, I drew attention to several matters which caused me some anxiety. However, the point to which I wish to draw attention is that Lloyd's has gone through the exercise required to sort

out its affairs. That exercise will have been noted by the people who will run the SROs and I am optimistic that they will be run properly.

If a large proportion of the members who effectively represent foreign-owned companies are in the business of monitoring and running the SROs, it is essential that we ensure that those people are themselves monitored by independent persons and that they work effectively. If one were to sum up the Bill in one sentence, it would be, "Will the SROs work effectively or not?"

Mr. Howard: I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash) for their support for these amendments, and express my appreciation of the sympathetic observations made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the difficult decisions which had to be made on this matter. I agreed with much of what they said. The decisions were difficult and there was a dilemma. The issues are not clear-cut. It is of notable interest that there was considerable pressure in another place from hon. Members of all parties for the Government to make the changes which form the basis of these amendments. It is fair to say that the Opposition Front Bench in another place was in the van of those requests.

It is no secret that I pondered long and hard on the issue before acceding to the representations. One circumstance which weighed with me in eventually reaching the conclusion that there was a case for an extension was the need not to preclude or inhibit the ability of industry to raise finance. Stabilisation is an accepted and widely-used technique in the new issues of securities, and such issues would be substantially inhibited if that technique were not available. That is why the extension in these amendments is limited, broadly speaking, in that direction.

The securities to which these exemptions will apply are strictly defined in the legislation. Although we recognise the case for an extension for new issues of securities and we do not wish to close the door now against the possibility of there being other categories of securities to which the exemption should apply, and to which these techniques should be applied, we are not at the moment persuaded that that is so. That is why the order-making procedure is set out in the legislation.

That is the balanced way in which we sought to approach the matter. The categories of securities are identified in the legislation. The rules which will govern the application of the technique are provided by the Securities and Investments Board. The House will not have failed to observe the striking discrepancy in the tone in which these matters were observed by the hon. Member for Dagenham, leading for the Opposition in this matter, and the wildly inaccurate statements made by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), which bore absolutely no relation to the text of the legislation. The inaccuracy of the hon. Gentleman's remarks is matched only by the lack of interest in this legislation which he displayed before this evening. I invite the House to treat his remarks with the utter contempt which they merit.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 45

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS RULES

Lords amendment made: No. 62, in page 31, line 45, at end insert—

"*(jj)* requiring the keeping of accounts and other records, as to their form and content and for their inspection;"—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 65, insert the following the new clause—

"*Financial resources rules*

(1) The Secretary of State may make rules requiring persons authorised to carry on investment business by virtue of section 24 or 30 above to have and maintain in respect of that business such financial resources as are required by the rules.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, rules under this section may—

(a) impose requirements which are absolute or which are to vary from time to time by reference to such factors as are specified in or determined in accordance with the rules;

(b) impose requirements which take account of any business (whether or not investment business) carried on by the person concerned in conjunction with or in addition to the business mentioned in subsection (1) above;

(c) make provision as to the assets, liabilities and other matters to be taken into account in determining a person's financial resources for the purposes of the rules and the extent to which and the manner in which they are to be taken into account for that purpose."

8.30 pm

Mr. Michael Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 66, in clause 46, page 32, line 42, after "45" insert "or *(Financial resources rules)*".

No. 108, in clause 57, page 45, line 24, at end insert—

"(2A) Subsection (1) above does not apply—

(a) to a contravention of rules made under section *(Financial resources rules)* or conditions imposed under section 46 in connection with an alteration of the requirements of those rules; or

(b) by virtue of subsection (2) above to a contravention of rules relating to a matter in respect of which rules have been or could be made under section *(Financial resources rules)*."

No. 109, in clause 57 page 45, line 26, leave out "this section" and insert

"subsection (1) above applies or of a contravention of rules made under section *(Financial resources rules)* above or such conditions as are mentioned in subsection (2A)*(a)* above".

No. 444, in schedule 8 page 166, line 26, at end insert—

"( ) The rules under section *(Financial resources rules)* of this Act shall not apply to an insurance company which is an authorised person by virtue of section 30 of this Act."

Mr. Howard: This new clause provides an explicit power to make financial resources or capital adequacy rules. Requirements as to capital adequacy are recognised as an important safeguard for investors, both directly in helping to head off financial problems in the firms they are dealing with and more generally in helping to avoid knock-on problems in the market as a whole. They are a feature of the banking and insurance regimes and of existing self-regulation, for instance, in the stock exchange.

[Mr. Howard]

It has always been the Government's intention that regulators should be able to set capital adequacy requirements. Doubts were expressed in Standing Committee by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about whether the "fit and proper" test for authorisation and the general power to make conduct of business rules were a sufficient basis. We have now concluded that it is desirable to put the matter beyond doubt by introducing an explicit power. That is the effect of the amendments.

Mr. Gould: In view of the Minister's concluding remarks, the House will not be surprised to hear that I welcome the new clause. Before I extend that welcome and ask a brief question, I shall defend my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). According to my recollection—he will correct me if I am wrong—he spoke at both the Second and Third Reading stages. I assure the House that he would have dearly wished to be on the Committee but for the fact that his services were so much in demand and he was on the Finance Bill Committee. His credentials are beyond attack.

I welcome the new clause. I am delighted that the Minister has recognised—it was a view shared by all members of the Committee, not simply a view expressed by Labour Members—the importance of making a specific reference to an important requirement.

I am intrigued about one aspect. Perhaps there is an obvious answer that I do not immediately see. The provision applies to those who secure authorisation by direct application under clause 24 and to those who secure authorisation under clause 30 by virtue of being authorised in another member state. That opens up the possibility that a person who is authorised under clause 30 and authorised, therefore, in his own native country might well be subject—if I read the clause correctly—to a set of different requirements which may have no equivalent in his home country but which lay down minimum capital adequacy rules. What would be the position if a person otherwise qualified for authorisation under clause 30 but failed to meet the rules which would prevail? Perhaps there is an obvious answer, but I do not see it. I am sure that there must be a straightforward answer.

Mr. Howard: The rules may also apply to persons authorised under clause 30. Rules may make different provisions for different cases. It would be possible for rules to be made under the provisions to persons authorised under clause 30.

Mr. Gould: Is the Minister saying that somebody who would be authorised under the general provisions laid down in clause 30 could, nevertheless, be precluded from carrying out investment business if his capital base was inadequate to meet the requirements laid down under the new clause?

Mr. Howard: That is the effect of what I have just said.

Mr. Gould: Could the general requirements of obligations under the treaty of Rome, and so on, which require us to accept without let or hindrance, as it were, the right of professional people to practise their profession throughout the Community therefore be put in jeopardy by what the Minister has just said?

Mr. Howard: I would not want to speculate on the consequences in Community law of what we are doing. Clearly, we would not have introduced the provision and enabled it to apply in the manner that I have suggested if the view was taken that it fell foul of the treaty. I do not accept that there would necessarily be any difficulties of that kind. Clearly, in applying the provisions, regard must be had to the provisions of the treaty. The clause permits the test to be applied to persons authorised under clause 30.

Mr. Cash: I hope that the amount which will be prescribed under the rules will be adequate—that is the acid test—and that the amount of financial resources to be required will cover the amount of contingent liability that could arise. I dare say that that is a big question. We have some experience of professional bodies such as the Law Society where there is a significant amount of money at stake. It is important that people should be aware of how much liability they may have to incur. I should be grateful if, in the course of time, the Minister would be good enough to drop me a line saying how the rules might be devised.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 49

INDEMNITY RULES

Lords amendment: No. 69, in page 34, line 30, at end insert

"; and any such request shall not be capable of being withdrawn after rules giving effect to it have been made but wittout prejudice to the power of the Secretary of State to revoke the rules if he thinks fit."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 69A in page 35, line 26 leave out subsection (5).

No. 70, after clause 49, insert the following new clause—

"*Compensation fund.*

.(1) The Secretary of State may by rules establish a scheme for compensating investors in cases where persons who are or have been authorised persons are unable, or likely to be unable, to satisfy claims in respect of any description of civil liability incurred by them in connection with their investment businesses.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, rules under this section may—

(a) provide for the administration of the scheme and, subject to the rules, the determination and regulation of any matter relating to its operation by a body appearing to the Secretary of State to be representative of, or of any class of, authorised persons;.

(b) establish a fund out of which compensation is to be paid;

(c) provide for the levying of contributions from, or from any class of, authorised persons and otherwise for financing the scheme and for the payment of contributions and other money into the fund;

(d) specify the terms and conditions on which, and the extent to which, compensation is to be payable and any circumstances in which the right to compensation is to be excluded or modified;

(e) provide for treating compensation payable under the scheme in respect of a claim against any person as extinguishing or reducing the liability of that person in respect of the claim and for conferring on

the body administering the scheme a right of recovery against that person being, in the event of his insolvency, a right not exceeding such right, if any, as the claimant would have had in that event; and

(f) contain incidental and supplementary provisions.

(3) A scheme under this section shall not be made so as to apply to persons who are members of a recognised self-regulating organisation except after consultation with that organisation or except at the request of a recognised professional body to persons who are certified by it and subject to its rules in carrying on all the investment business carried on by them; and no scheme applying to such persons shall be made unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that the rules establishing it make sufficient provision—

(a) for the administration of the scheme by a body on which the interests of those persons are adequately represented; and

(b) for securing that the amounts which they are liable to contribute reflect, so far as practicable, the amount of the claims made or likely to be made in respect of those persons.

(4) Where a scheme applies to such persons as are mentioned in subsection (3) above the rules under this section may—

(a) constitute the recognised self-regulating organisation or recognised professional body in question as the body administering the scheme in relation to those persons;

(b) provide for the levying of contributions from that organisation or body instead of from those persons; and

(c) establish a separate fund for the contributions and compensation payable in respect of those persons, with or without provision for payments and repayments in specified circumstances between that and any other fund established by the scheme.

(5) A request by a recognised professional body under subsection (3) above shall not be capable of being withdrawn after rules giving effect to it have been made but without prejudice to the power of the Secretary of State to revoke the rules if he thinks fit.

(6) Rules may be made—

(a) for England and Wales, under sections 411 and 412 of the Insolvency Act 1986;

(b) for Scotland—

(i) under the said section 411; and

(ii) in relation to the application of this section where the persons who are or have been authorised persons are persons whose estates may be sequestrated under the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, by the Secretary of State under this section; and

(c) for Northern Ireland, under Article 613 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and section 65 of the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978.

for the purpose of integrating any procedure for which provision is made by virtue of subsection (2)*(e)* above into the general procedure on a winding-up, bankruptcy or sequestration.".

Amendment to the Lords amendment, in page 16, line 15, leave out 'reflect' and insert

'are fair and reasonable in all the circumstances and take into account all relevant factors including'.

No. 220, after clause 118, insert the following new clause—

Indemnity schemes

(1) Any two or more registered friendly societies may, notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in their rules, enter into arrangements for the purpose of making funds available to meet losses incurred by any society which is a party to the arrangements or by the members of any such society by virtue of their membership of it.

(2) No such arrangements shall come into force unless they have been approved by the Chief Registrar of friendly societies or, as the case may be, the Registrar of Friendly Societies for Northern Ireland."

No. 327, in clause 149, page 117, line 24, leave out "or transferee body" and insert

", transferee body or body administering a scheme under section *(Compensation fund)* above".

No. 330, in clause 150, page 118, line 34, at end insert "or of enabling or assisting the body administrating a scheme under section *(Compensation fund)* above to discharge its functions under the scheme".

No. 428, in schedule 1, page 154, line 25, at end insert —

"(1A) The rules under that Chapter to be taken into account for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above include the rules made under section *(Financial resources rules)* and under section 49 and *(Compensation fund)* so far as not themselves applying to the members of the organisation."

No. 441, in schedule 6, page 161, line 17, leave out "section 49" and insert

"sections 49 and *(Compensation fund)*".

No. 442, in schedule 6, page 161, line 18, leave out "that section" and insert "those sections".

No. 445, in page 166, line 27, leave out "section 49" and insert

"sections 49 and *(Compensation fund)*".

No. 480, in page 178, line 41, leave out

"other than a member society".

No. 481, in page 178, line 42, at end insert—

"( ) Such rules shall not apply to a member society of a recognised self-regulating organisation for friendly societies unless that organisation has requested that such rules should apply to it; and any such request shall not be capable of being withdrawn after rules giving effect to it have been made but without prejudice to the power of the Registrar to revoke the rules if he and the Secretary of State think fit."

No. 482, in page 178, line 46, at end insert—

"17A. — (1) No scheme established by rules under section *(Compensation fund)* shall apply in cases where persons who are or have been regulated friendly societies are unable, or likely to be unable, to satisfy claims in respect of any description of civil liability incurred by them in connection with any regulated business but the Registrar may, with the consent of the Secretary of State, by rules establish a scheme for compensating investors in such cases.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (3) below, subsections (2) to (4) and (6) of that section shall apply in relation to such rules as they apply to rules under that section but with the substitution for the references to the Secretary of State, authorised persons, members and a recognised self-regulating organisation of references respectively to the Registrar, regulated friendly societies, member societies and a recognised self-regulating organisation for friendly societies.

(3) Subsection (3) of that section shall have effect with the substitution for the words "the Secretary of State is satisfied" of the words "the Registrar and the Secretary of State are satisfied.

(4) The references in section 149(3)*(b)* and 150(1)*(e)* of this Act to the body administering a scheme established under section *(Compensation fund)* of this Act shall include the body administering a scheme established under this paragraph".

No. 521, in page 188, line 18, leave out "and 17" and insert "17 and 17A".

No. 529, in page 200, line 50, at end insert—

"( ) the body administering a scheme under section *(Compensation fund)* of or paragraph 17A of Schedule 9 to that Act and any officer or servant of such a body,".

Mr. Howard: These amendments follow a reappraisal of the way the compensation provisions in the Bill are constructed. There are two main issues. The first concerns the machinery which the Bill provides. Existing clause 49 is based on the concept of compulsory indemnity along the lines of the Solicitors Act. This certainly provides a means

[Mr. Howard]

by which investors can benefit from payments. However, on further reflection, the Government have concluded that additional powers, involving the ability to set up a compensation scheme, such as those established under the Banking and Building Societies Acts, should be taken if the objective of the January 1985 White Paper is to be realised. This envisaged arrangements to compensate investors directly when an investment business could not do so. The new clause which we have tabled therefore follows the provisions of the Banking and Building Societies Acts.

The second issue was whether businesses authorised through membership of recognised self-regulating organisations should, in some circumstances, be obliged to participate in a central scheme established under the Bill. This issue was raised during consideration of the Bill at an earlier stage, and since then the SIB has argued persuasively that a scheme which is restricted to a possibly small and variegated range of directly authorised businesses may not be able to provide the level of protection for investors which we would wish to see as the basic standard in the industry.

The SIB has argued that the larger the coverage of a central fund, the easier it will be to obtain adequate finance and thus the better will be the compensation which investors can expect and the less will be the cost of making compensation available. I have considered these arguments carefully. I acknowledge the excellent record, for instance, of the existing stock exchange compensation scheme. However, I believe that the fundamental objective is that investors generally should be protected by compensation arrangements which are the best which can be reasonably made. Our approach to this question has been based on the policy set out in the January 1985 White Paper, which stated:

"Compensation should be available for investors in the event of loss arising from investment businesses' fraud, negligence, or failure to comply with requirements for the protection of clients' assets . . . The aim should be for the private investors to receive full compensation."

Hon. Members will be aware that the SIB put forward last year the idea of a scheme offering compensation of up to £30,000 to private clients of businesses in default. In a recent speech, the chairman of the SIB, welcoming the Government's proposal as one which was

"essential in order to provide the level of protection which small investors have every right to expect",

said that it might be possible to raise that top limit in a broadly based scheme. I am sure this will be contrasted with the higher notional limits available under, say, the existing stock exchange scheme. On that I would make three observations. First, not even the stock exchange scheme covers the range of liabilities mentioned in the White Paper. It would not, for instance, cover liabilities arising from an award of damages for negligence. Secondly, there is nothing to stop an SRO establishing a more generous scheme. The SIB proposals for a "federal" structure are designed to assist this. Thirdly, a high limit on a compensation fund operating in one area is no comfort to the investor who has lost perhaps his entire life savings in another area.

Having considered the various factors, I concluded that it would be right to provide for the rules to allow, subject to certain conditions being met, the establishment of a central compensation scheme. This will allow the creation of an effective and well-funded scheme. It will not be a feather-bedding scheme — the value of investments can go down as well as up and there is no intention of relieving the investor of the responsibility to exercise judgment and care in deciding how to invest his money. Where an investment fails for straightforward commercial reasons he cannot look to any regulator to make good his losses. However, the scheme should protect the interests of small investors who lose their money through an investment business's fraud, negligence or failure to comply with the rules.

I have at the same time recognised the concern that some SROs feel at the possibility of their members paying for claims on other businesses and the loss of independence in running their own schemes. Therefore, the new clause incorporates special safeguards in respect of cross-subsidisation and requires there to be adequate representation on the body administering a central scheme of the interests of members of participating SROs. As I have already pointed out, there is nothing to prevent an SRO from making arrangements for extra compensation to be available.

I recognise that this approach has not been universally welcomed by all the self-regulating organisations. However, the issue turns on one question alone: are we to have an efficient and well-funded scheme for protecting investors generally, or are we to settle for a compensation scheme which for many investors may frankly prove to be second best and lead to a level of protection overall lower than we could otherwise achieve? My view on this is that second best is not good enough. We must provide the machinery to allow investors to enjoy, in the words used in schedule 6,

"the best provision which can reasonably by made".

I have been persuaded that our approach provides this and that the alternatives do not.

The other amendments in this group are consequential to the policy that I have outlined. Hon. Members will note that the existing clause 49 has been retained, since I believe there may still be scope for compulsory insurance arrangements to play a part in this area. However, the clause has been amended to deal with the point on precipitate withdrawal of SROs or RPBs raised by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) in Standing Committee. We have also altered the way the clause is applied to persons authorised under clause 30 in order that we may have more flexibility on how we meet our Community obligations.

Mr. Gould: I find myself in the somewhat unusual position of enthusiastically endorsing almost every word that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary uttered on this group of amendments. He will recognise that his persuasive and forceful argument is a skilled elaboration of a case that I attempted to make in the Standing Committee. If I recall correctly, there was support for that case elsewhere. I particularly endorse the Parliamentary Under-Secretary's remarks — despite the reservations of the stock exchange, which I fully understand — about the importance of there being a comprehensive and guaranteed scheme so that the investor does not find different standards applying according to whichever part of the investment industry he happens to be dealing with.

A recent example which shows exactly why these provisions are necessary involves the collapse of a firm called McDonald Wheeler. The firm was a member of

FIMBRA, formerly NASDIM. It would thus have been authorised under this legislation. The investor will have adequate protection under the new regime. Unfortunately, McDonald Wheeler collapsed. It seems inevitable, I am sorry to say, that a number of investors will lose a good deal of money — certainly a good deal to them, at any rate. It also emerges that Mr. Wheeler, the man concerned in setting up the firm, had, to say the least, somewhat doubtful antecedents. FIMBRA, formerly NASDIM, was unable, for reasons one can understand, to check him out in an adequate fashion.

This gives rise to a range of other concerns about the readiness of SROs to take on what will clearly be an onerous responsibility. If FIMBRA, for which I have good regard — I certainly do not intend to attack it — has difficulties in fulfilling its potential responsibilities when the Bill becomes an Act, one can imagine that other SROs with even shorter histories than FIMBRA's will have equal or greater difficulties.

The point of recounting that story is to emphasise, as I am sure the Parliamentary Under-Secretary immediately recognises, that if such a situation were to arise under the legislation, the investors concerned would rightly expect, given these circumstances, to be compensated for at least part of their loss. They would turn to an adequate compensation fund which properly protected them. I pay tribute to the Government. Their proposals ought to put such a mechanism in place. I also pay tribute to the SIB which has campaigned long and hard for this outcome.

8.45 pm

I was interested to hear the comments of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary on the maximum limit of any individual payment. I take the view—I am sure that my hon. Friends will share it — that any maximum payment of £30,000 or £35,000 would be far too low. In regard to the instance that I described — McDonald Wheeler — I am already in touch with investors who have lost substantially in excess of that sum. In today's values, particularly in terms of redundancy payments and the prices that can be obtained for residential property, £30,000 is pitifully small. An amount of £100,000 is more appropriate. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary, if not directly involved in setting the limit, might at least use all his influence to ensure that a more sensible limit eventually finds its way into the scheme.

I welcome the provision as a very important step towards the objective of proper investment protection.

Mr. Nelson: I welcome the amendments, with the reservation that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) mentioned about the limit that should be set. The losses that can be incurred as a result of fraud and the uncertainty and devastating impact on individual lives should not be ignored in the consideration of a Bill whose principal objective is investor protection. We should, above all, be concerned to ensure that ordinary, legitimate members of the public who engage not in bad investment judgment but in reasonable judgment about with whom they place their moneys in certain markets are protected and compensated if, for a variety of reasons, whether due to fraud or whatever, a firm subsequently collapses.

We should bring these matters to a personal level and demonstrate their importance. I should like to read to the House an extract from a letter from one of my constituents, which clearly shows the need for a central compensation fund and adequate compensation for people who lose out in situations of this kind. My constituent, whose name I shall not mention, wrote:

"I am writing to you in sheer despair concerning funds which myself, my wife and my daughter have invested in the above firm"—

McDonald Wheeler Fund Management. He continued:

"Over the last two years myself and members of my family have invested over £25,000 with McDonald Wheeler, at the end of July 1986, the Department of Trade stepped in, Wheelers went into liquidation, with the firm of Grant Thornton under Mr. Nick Lyle, being appointed by the Receiver to investigate.

We the clients were informed that it would take a fortnight to sort matters out, then later we were told it would take a while longer. Three months have now passed and what few reports we have received leave us in despair and feeling helpless and hopeless. The only information that can be collected, or heard, is from the newspapers, financial reports and T.V. and Radio Money Programmes, all of which continuously harp on about — McDONALD WHEELER THE CRASHED INVESTMENT FIRM — CLIENTS HAVE LOST ALL OF THEIR MONEY.

In view of our despair, I have tried in all directions to obtain correct information, but no one will help. FIMBRA utterly refused to step in and assist on behalf of clients, they in fact don't wish to know, in spite of McDonald Wheeler being a member and fully vouched and investigated by them.

Grant Thornton tell me they are completely unable to help, or offer information as they forward facts only to the Official Receiver, he in turn says he can do nothing, as he is required to supply all findings to the Courts. We the clients and investors, the real people who matter are simply left high and dry.

I feel so sick about this matter, particularly so as the bulk of our investments are owned by my wife and were providing her with a necessary monthly income, from which she has been completely cut off and lived in a most restricted situation, all through no fault of her own making and sheer default on Wheeler's part.

Unfortunately, we in common with all Wheeler's clients and incidentally as thousands of other investors also feel, invest funds in an investment firm that is a member of FIMBRA. How wrong we all were and are!!! FIMBRA is utterly useless, it is thoroughly unable to do anything, the same organisation investigated McDonald Wheeler when he first applied for membership in the early 1980s, they did not discover that Wheeler had twice previously been bankrupt . . . a compensation fund must be set up to protect investors, it will take a year to come into force.—So much for that— Now, twelve years later 1986, they are saying the same old thing over again, namely a compensation fund will start next year. I can foresee any such compensation remaining well clear of the McDonald Wheeler case, involving some £15,000,000 of clients' investments.

I consider it a disgrace on the part of Parliament, after all this time—12 years and still having done nothing to protect investors and people such as my wife, whose particular funds were hard saved life earnings on her own efforts, also including her only legacy, from her father, who served for 30 years in the British Army through two wars as an RSM, Military Medal and Bar . . . We do so desperately wish to know if our money will be recovered and when, the facts must be known somewhere.

In a situation such as this, surely the government can take some action to assist us, the investors who placed funds in an accepted responsible organisation, namely FIMBRA."

I apologise to the House for the length of my quotation from that letter, but I hope that all hon. Members will understand that when it comes down to an individual level it is a real tragedy and disaster for those concerned. We have a responsibility to protect those people. Another thing that comes out of that letter is the desperate lack of information for people in such a situation, with the worry and loneliness that they experience. Any funds or regulatory systems that we set up should provide not only funds to compensate but much more and immediate

[Mr. Nelson]

information to those who lose out. As for the amount of compensation that should be provided, I feel that it is not adequate to replace an open-ended limitless compensation figure before with a £30,000 figure now. At the very least, it should be a six-figure sum.

It is very important to recognise that the obligation of members of self regulation organisations to contribute toward a compensation fund, either within the SRO or centrally, imposes a discipline on those members to report suspect cases in the market in which they are operating. If members have to contribute to a central fund or an SRO fund, they will be watching much more carefully the activities, risk and vulnerability of other firms operating in the same market, and will have the incentive and initiative to report to the SRO that a firm in their market place is suspect because they know that if that firm goes to the wall, they may be on line to pay compensation funds. I therefore take with a pinch of salt some of the whinnying and carping of individual firms about the contribution that they will have to pay because it will be a good discipline for them to report to the SRO situations in which a risk is involved. It will also enhance the authority and right of the SRO to intervene and check out at an early stage cases that are suspect and thus to act in the interests of the protection of investors and of the market as a whole.

I do not believe that the debate can be seen in isolation from the subject of separation of clients' money. I think that it is fair to say that if the rest of the provisions are complied with and adequately enforced, particularly with regard to the separation of clients' funds, there will be less need for the compensation funds to be claimed upon by individuals who have lost out. All the provisions must therefore hang together.

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, in replying to the debate, will go further than he went earlier. It is not enough to hope that an adequate limit will be agreed at some stage in future. Under these provisions, the Secretary of State may make rules, so he can establish within the scheme a limit considerably higher than £30,000 or ensure that in the administration of the scheme by the SIB there is a limit substantially higher than £30,000. It is not an adequate answer to say, "Before we delegate the running of the compensation fund to the SIB, we would have to be assured that it would be adequate and that the limit set for compensation was sufficiently high". My hon. and learned Friend can ensure that now. He can provide a much more generous and appropriate limit before he hands down the administration of the compensation fund to the SIB. We look to him to do that. The public and investors such as my constituents look to him. I hope that in winding up the debate he will be able to provide some much-needed assurance to past and potential investors.

Mr. Ashdown: I associate myself strongly with what the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) has said, particularly his last words.

I welcome the Minister's change of mind on this occasion. I ask him, gently, to contrast that welcome with his sharp, caustic, uncalled-for and unpleasant comments when I sought to exercise the same judgment earlier in the debate. A change of view caused him to say that my party was an expert on changing its mind. That comes strangely from the mouth of a Minister who has brought before the House a Bill that is widely regarded as disorganised and a dog's breakfast, as well as having close to 1,000 amendments, 20 new clauses and four new schedules. In its present form the Bill commands the confidence of only some 20 per cent. of the City, so it is said. It is regarded by myself and many others—I suspect on Conservative Benches, too — as a Bill that will have to return for amendment within the next few years, probably two or three, which is the figure that I have heard. If the Minister had any self-respect he would not mention other people's change of mind, bearing in mind that the Bill stands as an appalling indictment, if not on his judgment, on the judgment of the Government. I shall come to happier matters — that is, the amendment before us. If the Minister had been wiser, kept his mouth shut and had more self-restraint, those matters might not have been thrown at him in that fashion, for that has not been the tone of the debate that we have been conducting.

The comments which have been made about limitation are important and the Minister has it in his power to make it clear that the limit of £30,000 is inadequate. If he cannot set a precise sum, let him make it clear that he regards the limit of £30,000 as inadequate. He need not necessarily set a figure if he finds that too difficult a task. This matter was raised in another place and in discussing a probing amendment Lord Ezra said that perhaps there was not a case for an industry-wide compensation fund. I believe that such a fund is extremely important, and I subscribe to what has been said by the Minister, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and others. There is a case for an industry-wide compensation fund and that case becomes stronger when surveillance and monitoring services are federated. That means a unified compensation fund along with surveillance and monitoring services operating between SROs and the SIB.

9 pm

That argument has been advanced in a number of letters whcih the Minister has recieved and which I have seen, and I am sorry that he has set his face against a federated structure for surveillance and monitoring. I think that such a system would have offered an advantage. We have an industry-like unified compensation fund, which is a good thing, but a fragmented surveillance service.

One of the bases upon which the Bill is founded is the need for effective rules, effective surveillance and effective compensation. When these three elements are together in the same body, they provide what might be described as an incentive. It is one which works in a virtuous circle. Effective rules and effective surveillance will mean that it is likely at the end of the day that less will be paid out in compensation, but if responsibility for compensation lies with someone else, there will be no incentive. In some circumstances — this is not inevitable — the incentive could operate the other way round. If those who have lower costs because of less adequate surveillance and easier rules receive an advantage if the cost of compensation is shared equally with those who have fewer claims because of more stringent rules and better surveillance, that could lead to a vicious circle instead of a virtuous one. In other words, the rain raineth on the just and the unjust, but chiefly on the just because the unjust have stolen the umbrellas. In this instance the unjust will have to pay less for umbrellas.

The Minister has said that there are provisions in the Bill which prevent this cross-subsidisation. I presume that he is referring to subsection (3)*(b)* of the new clause, which states:

"for securing that the amounts which they are liable to contribute reflect, so far as practicable, the amount of claims made, or likely to be made, in respect of those persons."

I would welcome an arrangement where the premiums to the compensation fund were related directly to the sums paid out in respect of each SRO. That would be possible within the terms of the Bill, and certainly the concept of variable premiums for different SROs is possible. Why should that correlation between premiums and the compensation that is paid out not be precise mathematically and why should the arrangement not be conducted in that fashion? Why do we have to use the term "so far as practicable"? I shall be grateful if the Minister explains to us precisely how the brake on cross-subsidisation will be put into effect so as not to build in the vicious circle that will tend to drag standards down.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I wish to ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister two questions. Under the scheme of compensation which he and the SIB envisage, will it be necessary for fraud or negligence to be proved before compensation is activated? If that is necessary, it could be some years before the defrauded investor received compensation. Secondly, if an investment business were to lose authorisation — for example, as a result of being expelled from an SRO — would compensation be available subsequently to an investor who, it later transpired, had lost money because of the practices of the firm before it lost membership?

Mr. Bermingham: The next time the Minister cares to attack me personally—I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) for coming to my defence — I ask him to check his facts. As a good, cautious and learned lawyer of the past, he should know that the first thing to do before launching out is to check one's facts. Long before the Minister was appointed, when he was a Back Bencher, he will recall that the House debated the Gower report and stock exchange arrangements with a view to a cessation of the various actions which were then current in the courts. If the Minister reads the record of our proceedings, he will find that on each and every occasion I took part in those debates. I invite him at an appropriate stage to withdraw his remark about my interests in this subject.

I may, for once, get an apology, if the Minister's shoulders are broad enough, when he discovers that I agree with him about the compensation provisions, save for the reservation that the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) entered with regard to the £30,000. I do so on the basis of my experience as a former member of the Law Society. The Law Society has a limitless compensation scheme, and rightly so. It is not the client's fault that the broker or dealer is crooked or that the solicitor is crooked. There is no way in which to foresee that a solicitor will, in middle life, run off with the funds. One can sometimes get a warning sign.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The secretary comes first.

Mr. Bermingham: We will ignore my hon. Friend's ignorant comment.

There are warning signs which can be seen in the everyday way in which they deal with their practice. Warning signs could be seen in the City with certain types of transaction occurring or shares being unloaded.

If every member in an SRO knows that, if somebody were to make off with the funds, they would have to contribute towards the compensation fund, they would be put on guard. I am sure that hon. Members who are members of the Law Society will confirm that that society's experience is that one of the best forms of watchdog is fellow members who see things happening. They are put on notice because they have a personal interest in the integrity, honour and good practice of their fellow members.

If the City believes that it consists of people of the highest calibre and personal integrity, what does it have to fear from a compensation fund that is 100 per cent. safe for its investors? If they cry, "The sums are so great, we cannot meet them" they are saying that there are people in the City who will make away with millions of pounds which the City cannot afford to meet. If we maintain that our City is equal in integrity to anything in the world, what better way is there to demonstrate that fact than to have a compensation fund which meets every claim in full? That has the advantage of policing and of demonstrating belief in the City's integrity.

The Bill would empower the Minister to intervene and make the necessary regulations. If he believes that the investor has rights and ought to be protected, what better way is there to fulfil that belief than to ensure that when an investor is faced with fraud or negligence he is protected 100 per cent? It is not too much to leave as the hallmark of the Bill a compensation scheme which embraces full protection. That is within the Minister's power. I challenge him to cover the client in full, bearing in mind the fact that the law and accountancy, for example, have such indemnity schemes.

If the Minister believes that the Bill exists to protect the City because it is a City of integrity, he will act and the compensation level will be 100 per cent.

Mr. Tim Smith: I warmly welcome this group of amendments on the compensation fund. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), I should like to refer to the case of McDonald Wheeler as it highlights the need for a compensation fund.

If there had been positive vetting of Mr. Wheeler's application, it would have been discovered that he had previously made an arrangement with his creditors, but it is estimated that it would cost between £1,000 and £1,500 to vet each application. As a result, the process is a negative one—the applicant fills in the form and, if he tells lies, that is merely the beginning of the fraud. There are also demands for references, and Mr. Wheeler would have supplied those.

Mr. Nelson: I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend at this stage. Will he confirm that, if the legislation goes through, such a situation should not and would not recur, because to carry on business as an authorised person one would expect a self-regulating organisation to make reasonable inquiries? I do not know whether the cost is £1,000. There must be some criterion attached to authorisation and the sort of questions supplied by my hon. Friend should be basic to such a process.

Mr. Smith: That is obviously a matter for the SIB. In practice, the SRO would have to monitor every court and every judgment made and keep a list of all those people who had made an arrangement with their creditors. That would be a substantial operation, so it is likely that checking would be carried out on the basis of negative vetting. Therefore, fraudsters will still get through the net. Mr. Wheeler is obviously a crook. At the end of the day, it does not matter what rules and regulations there are about the prevention of fraud, we cannot prevent everybody from committing fraud. There will always be fraudsters and people who tell lies. The case highlights the need for a compensation scheme.

Mr. Cash: Although we were colleagues in the Committee, I find my hon. Friend's comments startling. The whole basis of a "fit and proper person" test is that persons who become members of SROs are fit and proper. There never is, nor has been, any intention that this should be conducted on the basis of a negative clearance.

Mr. Smith: I am surprised at that, because it seems to me that there will always be people who are able to persuade the body in question that they are fit and proper people when they are not. There will always be crooks and there will always be people who are prepared to deceive the body in question. To pretend that we are setting up a system that will prevent all fraud is absurd. That is why it is essential to have a compensation fund.

The McDonald Wheeler case has a lot in common with the Norton-Warburg case, and is a useful reminder of why we had this legislation. It is to protect small investors. I am clear about McDonald Wheeler. The man is a crook. He told lies to the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association. It has been said that FIMBRA should have conducted an earlier spot check, but it conducts spot checks on one in five members a year. Again, it is a question of resources and how much money and manpower that will be put into this. It was a spot check by FIMBRA that revealed what was going on at McDonald Wheeler. Presumably that was in response to complaints, but it is at least possible that if the spot check had not been made McDonald Wheeler would still be trading.

It is important to appreciate that FIMBRA does not have the powers it will have once the Bill becomes law. For example, it was not able simply to suspend its member from trading but had to go to the Department of Trade and Industry and get it to take the necessary action. My hon. Friend said that investors were being kept in the dark, but the official receiver appointed on 6 August wrote a three-page letter setting out the circumstances and describing the situation, and sent it on 19 September to all investors. He has done what he can to keep people informed.

Mr. McCrindle: Does my hon. Friend agree that some of the criticism directed at FIMBRA in relation to the McDonald Wheeler case is unfair in that it changed its name from NASDIM, which was a different operation from the future SRO that is likely to operate under the name FIMBRA? Would it not be as well to underline the fact that FIMBRA, as now constituted, is a different body to the FIMBRA, assuming that it keeps that name, that becomes an official SRO as designated under the Bill?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is right. It is perhaps inevitable that when legislation such as this is going through Parliament, some people think that, because we have discussed this in large measure, it is in operation. Unfortunately for investors in McDonald Wheeler, that is not the case. We are talking about a compensation scheme which we hope will deal with such cases in the future. That is why it is so very important. My modest amendment addresses itself to the point to which reference has already been made: the degree to which contributions relate to subsequent claims. That should not be the only consideration to be taken into account when contributions are calculated.

9.15 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I hesitate to intervene in this bitter internecine war. Indeed, I hesitate to speak at all, given the Minister's unkind and hostile response to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). I do not want to bring similar retribution down on my head. I understand why the Minister is somewhat ratty, given this dog's breakfast of a Bill that he has to see through the House in the dying stages of the Session. However, it was unkind to speak thus to my hon. Friend.

The compensation fund casts a curious light on the Minister's approach to the Bill. I did not attend all of the Standing Committee sittings because I broke my arm, but I recollect that in Standing Committee the Opposition supported the establishment of a compensation fund. Indeed, they urged it on the Minister. However, he was full of all kinds of negative arguments about the difficulties, and why it was not possible to establish such a fund. He would not accept the idea. Now he has accepted it. He has told us what a good idea it is and why it is so marvellous.

If the Minister has had this volte face on the compensation fund, I wonder how many other amendments he should have accepted in Committee. Should he not have accepted a statutory basis for the whole system? It ought to have been accepted, and it would be accepted now, if there were time. Instead there is an impetuous rush to get the Bill on to the statute book. We ought to start all over again. The Bill will have to come back to the House, not for a respray but for complete reconstruction —and fairly soon, too. Its prospects for success look about the same as the prospects for success of the stock exchange computer. If the compensation fund is such a good idea now, why was the Minister so cool and hostile about it in Standing Committee? It is deeply worrying.

It is right that a compensation fund should be established. The only argument is over its size. It is a shame that the Minister is being cautious about its size. The Opposition's view is that the bigger it is the better. It would give confidence to the industry. A sizeable compensation fund would give psychological confidence to the industry. Our first requirement is to provide protection to the investor, in particular to the small investor. He will be under more pressure because of the attempt to regulate.

Yesterday a number of hon. Members went to a lunch that was given by the home service insurance industry, which has always enjoyed a good relationship with its customers. Because it must have a long and continuous relationship with its customers, it visits them month in, month out. Therefore, the industry does not indulge in sharp practice and put pressure on its customers. Now it is being forced, because of the sins of others, to operate within a legislative framework that will impose costs on the industry, which will result in pressure to oversell. It is

right that the investor should be protected, but in some respects the close relationship between the investor and that section of the industry will be weakened by the Bill. It is imperative that we provide effective protection if we propose to interfere in the relationship.

The Opposition support the principle of the fund because the danger of the intense competition that will be liberated is that people will cut corners and go in for undesirable and unacceptable practices. There are also the dangers that fraud, negligence and failure to comply with the rules, those things that the Minister gave as the basic causes for compensation, will become more common. That will be as a result of the extremely intense competition that will occur.

There will not only be a threat from foreign instititions and firms coming to Britain; there will be a threat from the natives as well. They will face intense competition that will expose all investors, but especially the small investor, to fraud. It is right to highlight the case of McDonald Wheeler once again because of the points that were tellingly made about one small investor but which, of course, affect a large number of such investors.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on his election to the shadow Cabinet and therefore to the next Government. He defended FIMBRA, but there has been a steady stream of criticism of FIMBRA because of its role in the McDonald Wheeler affair. The "Post", which is the United Kingdom insurance journal, says that the whole affair "makes sad and disturbing reading." It says:

"John Wheeler had been a director of two companies put into liquidation."

But he was still accepted by FIMBRA née NASDIM for membership. Not only that, but the warning signals about which my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South spoke had been transmitted to FIMBRA because several worried investors had contacted it in the months leading up to all this. However, FIMBRA said:

"it is not possible to send an inspector into a company as soon as a complaint is made. 'SROs cannot be seen to be acting capriciously.'"

What is "acting capriciously" in the face of representation on this scale?

Mr. Tim Smith: The first complaint came from a former employee, and one has to be a little circumspect about former employees. Later, investors complained and at that point action was taken.

Mr. Mitchell: The trigger point must be the complaint from the worried investors and it came quite early on. I agree that a complaint from an employee could be made from malicious motives and for that reason the FIMBRA rebuttal was perhaps accurate in that instance. It also had several subsequent complaints from investors and those should have triggered the action. For FIMBRA to say:

"We must be sure of our facts before we send in the heavy mob"

casts a curious light on its own procedures, given the casual nature with which it seems to have accepted the firm for membership.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the system of intermittent or spot auditing of members from time to time might be a safeguard? That happens in other professions.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is right. What worries me is the casual nature of FIMBRA. It says that it vets "all potential members", but the vetting procedure is carried out on a negative basis. It says:

"We ask all potential members a whole range of questions, including whether they have ever been bankrupt."

As the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said, it is possible for people to lie and deceive. The SROs have to provide for that and must have more stringent checks rather than just accept a casual declaration in answer to a casual question. This firm used the NASDIM logo on its advertising material and presumably that gave it some credibility. If people believed—and this belief appears to be widespread — that these organisations will provide effective protection for the investor, to allow a doubtful firm to use the logo on its advertising is wrong and must require more stringent checks than those which have previously been made.

That is an example in which no one appears in a good light. However, it should prove a ghastly warning for us. It shows the need for the compensation fund. Even the Minister — recalcitrant learner though he is in these instances—with the blandishments and in the face of the brilliant adult education course given to him on these matters by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham over the months, has, thanks to the class, been slowly brought up to scratch. However, it has not brought him far enough up to scratch. We want the Minister to pass his O-levels in this subject. That means accepting the principle of a larger fund. When it comes to the principle of extra compensation funds for the SROs, he should give these a somewhat more enthusiastic endorsement. The Minister said, in relation to the extra compensation funds, that "there is nothing to prevent them". That is a ringing invocation to get out there and establish the fund. That was a classic reply, written by a civil servant on whose doormat it must say "Not unwelcome". There is nothing to prevent the setting up of extra compensation funds.

I believe that it is essential that these supplementary funds be created. However, I end by welcoming the Minister's belated conversion to the principles that have been urged on him so strenuously by the Opposition. I hope that he goes further in his educational process.

Mr. Butterfill: These amendments make a worthwhile contribution to the improvement of the Bill. I understand and sympathise with the concerns of the stock exchange and the clearing banks and others who for a long time have been maintaining well-regulated markets, and providing more than adequate compensation for investors. They might be called upon to contribute in a scheme in which some of the participants were not as well regulated and did not cover their members adequately for the losses which might be sustained. That is a legitimate concern which is met in part by the proposal.

We must have more stringent policing. The examples that have been quoted about McDonald Wheeler and the present requirements of FIMBRA illustrate that all too clearly. It would not be unreasonable for FIMBRA to be expected to have details of county court records — for example, of bankruptcies. Such details are already available to all credit organisations, banks and hire purchase companies which subscribe to a service which exists at relatively modest cost to provide that information. All SROs should also subscribe to that service and ensure that they know more about the people whom they accept for membership.

[Mr. Butterfill]

Those of us who are members of professional bodies will know that we already accept an enormous cost by way of insurance for the right to be able to practise. Those members or putative members of SROs who are squealing about the cost of being permitted to trade in future do not have a case. We are talking about protecting investors and they must be prepared to pay an adequate price if they want to be in business.

I have a suggestion for those SROs. By way of compensation fund, they should require individual members to insure themselves as the price of membership. If they are dodgy enough, they will not get insurance, and if they are relatively dodgy they will have to pay a large premium. That should be the basis on which the compensation fund is assessed.

Mr. Cash: We in the Conservative party put an enormous premium on the small investor. The flotation of British Gas and TSB and other activities fall into the general context of the private investment activity in which members of the SROs engage. It is of vital concern to us, therefore, that the small investor has adequate protection. I welcome the provision for compensation. Because the SROs provide an imprimatur to the investor, he knows that when he deals with a member of one of those organisations he will receive the advice that he requires and that the organisation is fit and proper and—as I argued in the Committee—competent. The compensation question is extremely important to the proper running of the City in the future. The example given relates to the situation before the rules are brought into effect and shows the extreme difficulty and danger which apply without proper rules and compensation.

The clause provides that the Secretary of State may, among other things, specify the terms and conditions and the extent to which compensation is payable, and the circumstances in which the right to compensation is excluded or modified. If the Minister cannot do so, I hope that the SIB will indicate where the right to compensation might be excluded or modified under the rules. Reference has already been made to the comparable professional bodies engaged in investment activity and advice. They have limitless compensation provision. There is no reason why there should not be extemely effective compensation provision. A limit of £30,000 for any one claim is derisory. I recommed a revision of the thoughts expressed by the SIB on that matter. I understand that it might increase the limit.

I have expressed my concern about the "cosy club." I am worried that people can be blackballed out of some organsiations without due cause. I deplore the notion that people should be accepted, or not accepted, on the basis of negative clearance. That is the nearest thing to total nonsense that I have heard tonight. I hope that in applying the fit and proper person test in conjunction with compensation we shall ensure that the small investor is properly protected. I am confident that the Minister will monitor the provision and that it will work effectively.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful for the general welcome for the provisions. It is impossible not to have sympathy with the constituent mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson). One of my constituents came to my surgery on Saturday with a similar tale. It is impossible not to feel sympathy for those who have suffered losses in similar circumstances. Clearly, the legislation must prevent such losses occurring in the future without the benefit of compensation. Our objective is to provide for the best protection reasonable. That is a requirement of schedule 6. The Bill does not set a maximum limit on the payments that can be made to an individual investor. That is provided for in the rules contained in the new clauses.

The SIB has indicated its policy and is considering a limit higher than that found in other financial sectors. For example, for banking the limit is 75 per cent. of up to £10,000 and for building societies the limit is 90 per cent. of up to £30,000. The Law Society compensation fund is not as extensive or generous as was suggested by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). There is a discretionary compensation fund covering fraud only. Indeed, I believe that it is popularly referred to as the swindle fund. That body's scheme has limits, but other professional bodies have no compensation scheme at all, so one should not lightly assume that it is easy to make very generous arrangements. Any compensation provision can be made only by levying investment firms. It is the investor who ultimately pays, and it is not to the benefit of investors if an extremely high notional limit is achieved by levies which drive many firms out of business or result in very high charges to investors. Nevertheless, I am sure that the SIB, in arriving at what it will regard as the best provision that can reasonably be made, will have regard to the observations made in the debate by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and will pay serious attention to them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-upon-Avon (Mr. Howarth) raised two points. The first related to whether it was necessary for fraud or negligence to be proved. That is a matter for the rules of the SIB and of the SROs in relation to their schemes, which will define the cases in which money can be paid. They would also be able to provide for provisional payments to be made in advance. To some extent, that will meet the concern that my hon. Friend expressed about the difficulties that would arise if formal proof had to be provided. My hon. Friend also raised a point about the circumstances that could arise if a firm left an SRO. A firm that has once been authorised will be subject to the compensation rules. Those rules will determine exactly how investors will be compensated, and the clause provides expressly for the situation described by my hon. Friend.

If I understood the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) correctly, he wanted to know why subsidisation could not be prevented altogether. All compensation arrangements involve an element of cross-subsidy, and the safeguards in the clause mean that in normal circumstances members of an SRO participating in the scheme will meet the cost of the claims on their fellow members. Thus cross-subsidisation will arise only in extremis, when an SRO demonstrates that a major default or series of defaults means that its members cannot bear the full cost of the compensation required, even over an extended period of years. If the body running the scheme is convinced of that, however, the affected SRO can receive a grant from the fund, which might well be repayable and which can be raised by levying the members of all the other SROs and any businesses directly authorised by the SIB. On top of that, participating SROs and RPBs would be represented on the body making that decision. With those safeguards, I do not think that it is unreasonable for other

businesses to contribute. The alternative is that investors might not be compensated. The view expressed in all quarters of the House is that that should not happen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) asked about the circumstances in which exclusion from the right to recover compensation might be made. One such example might be where the person suffering the loss was involved in a conspiracy with the investment business concerned. It would not be unreasonable in those circumstances to provide for an exclusion.

I am sure that the Bill's compensation provisions represent a substantial improvement for the protection of investors, and I am grateful to hon. Members on both sides of the House for the welcome that the provisions have received.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 52

RESTRICTIONS ON ADVERTISING

Lords amendments Nos. 79 to 87 agreed to.

Clause 53

EXCEPTIONS FROM RESTRICTIONS ON ADVERTISING

Lords amendments Nos. 88 to 96 agreed to.

Clause 55

PUBLIC STATEMENT AS TO PERSON'S MISCONDUCT

Lords amendment No. 97 agreed to.

Clause 56

INJUNCTIONS AND RESTITUTION ORDERS

Lords amendments Nos 98 to 103 agreed to.

Clause 57

ACTIONS FOR DAMAGES

Lords amendments Nos. 104 and 106 to 109 agreed to.

Clause 58

GAMING CONTRACTS

Lords amendments Nos. 110 and 111 agreed to.

Clause 59

SCOPE OF POWERS

Lords amendments Nos. 112 to 119 agreed to.

Clause 61

RESTRICTION ON DEALING WITH ASSETS

Lords amendments Nos. 120 and 121 agreed to.

Clause 62

VESTING OF ASSETS IN TRUSTEE

Lords amendments Nos. 122 to 124 agreed to.

Clause 63

MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS IN UNITED KINGDOM

Lords amendments Nos. 125 and 126 agreed to.

Clause 65

NOTICES

Lords amendment No. 127 agreed to.

Clause 66

BREACH OF PROHIBITION OR REQUIREMENT

Lords amendments Nos. 128 to 139 agreed to.

Clause 68

RESTRICTIONS ON PROMOTION

Lords amendment: No. 140, in page 51, line 32, leave out "and (3)" and insert ", (3) and (3A)".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will discuss Lords amendment No. 141, in page 52, line 13, at end insert—

"(3A) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for exempting single property schemes from subsection (1) above.

(3B) For the purposes of subsection (3A) above a single property scheme is a scheme which has the characteristics mentioned in subsection (3C) below and satisfies such other requirements as are specified in the regulations conferring the exemption.

(3C) The characteristics referred to above are—

(a) that the property subject to the scheme (apart from cash or other assets held for management purposes) consists of—

(i) a single building (or a single building with ancillary buildings) managed by or on behalf of the operator of the scheme; or

(ii) a group of adjacent or contiguous buildings managed by him or on his behalf as a single enterprise,

with or without ancillary land and with or without furniture, fittings or other contents of the building or buildings in question; and

(b) that the units of the participants in the scheme are either dealt in on a recognised investment exchange or offered on terms such that any agreement for their acquisition is conditional on their admission to dealings on such an exchange.

(3D) Regulations under subsection (3A) above may contain such supplementary and transitional provisions as the Secretary of State thinks necessary and may also contain provisions imposing obligations or liabilities on the operator and trustee (if any) of an exempted scheme, including, to such extent as he thinks appropriate, provisions for purposes corresponding to those for which provision can be made under section 77 below in relation to authorised unit trust schemes."

Mr. Butterfill: I apologise for interrupting this rapid succession of amendments, but at this juncture I wish to say how pleased I am to see amendments Nos. 140 and 141 and to know that many people outside the Chamber will be gratified that they provide a basis for establishing a unitised market in properties. That is especially important with regard to urban renewal.

I am aware that many people—some eminent—have made criticisms of our failure both in industry and in general to carry out sufficient urban renewal. The whole concept of property unitisation will go a long way to facilitate urban renewal.

One of the problems of major projects of urban renewal is that when they are carried out by the private sector, such projects are extremely expensive and complex and also risky with the result that very few individual firms have been prepared to carry them out. Under the concept of unitisation such large and relatively risky projects can be split up among a large number of investors and will therefore become more feasible propositions. The other attraction of the proposal is that it will make liquidity within the market very much better and generally facilitate the ownership of property by a much wider group of individuals. For all those reasons, I warmly congratulate my hon. and learned Friend the Minister on the proposals contained in the amendment.

9.45 pm

Mr. Howard: I express my gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) for the welcome he has given to these provisions. He raised the matter in Committee and I should like to express my gratitude for the constructive role he played in enabling us to reach a satisfactory solution.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 142 to 177 agreed to.

New Clause

CHAPTER IXA

Lords amendment: No. 178, after clause 93, to insert

"AUDITORS

Appointment of auditors

.—(1) The Secretary of State may make rules requiring a person who is authorised to carry on investment business by virtue of section 24 or 30 above and who, apart from the rules, is not required by or under any enactment to appoint an auditor to appoint as an auditor a person satisfying such conditions as to qualifications and otherwise as may be specified in or imposed under the rules.

(2) Rules under this section may make provision—

(a) specifying the manner in which and the time within which an auditor is to be appointed;

(b) requiring the Secretary of State to be notified of any such appointment and enabling the Secretary of State to make an appointment if no appointment is made or notified as required by the rules;

(c) with respect to the remuneration of an auditor appointed under the rules;

(d) with respect to the term of office, removal and resignation of any such auditor;

(e) requiring any such auditor who is removed, resigns or not reappointed to notify the Secretary of State whether there are any circumstances connected with his ceasing to hold office which he considers should be brought to the Secretary of State's attention.

(3) An auditor appointed under the rules shall in accordance with the rules examine and report on the accounts of the authorised person in question and shall for that purpose have such duties and powers as are specified in the rules."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Tim Smith: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, in line 6, leave out from "above" to second "to" in line 8.

Mr. Speaker: It will be convenient also to take Lords amendments Nos. 179 to 182, 187, 210, 333 and 381.

Mr. Smith: This group of amendments deals with the provision for auditors now in the Bill. I welcome the provisions which I think strengthen and reinforce the Bill. I have only one concern, which is that amendment No. 178, which introduces the new clause about auditors, is limited to the appointment of auditors by the designated agency to investment businesses which are not otherwise audited, that is, unincorporated, businesses.

One aspect of the McDonald Wheeler case which has been given insufficient attention is the position of the auditors to that company. They published a clean audit report for the 1984 accounts and shared the building in Canterbury with McDonald Wheeler. That gives some idea of their relationship with the company. No doubt they are being investigated along with the company, but it may be sensible to extend the clause so that the Securities and Investments Board could take a more general interest in who was appointed auditors.

We might reach the point where, rather as in the case of Lloyd's, it would be appropriate to have a panel of auditors who were approved as having the necessary experience and qualifications to audit authorised investment businesses particularly as it would be something of an extended audit, not a Companies Act audit. They will have to report as accountants on whether the business has complied with the conduct of business rules, or at least some of them. That will require some special expertise and experience. Therefore, it might be sensible to extend the clause in the way that my amendment proposes and I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will consider doing that.

Mr. Cash: I am slightly worried about the provisions of subsection (5) of the new clause introduced by Lords amendment No. 180, which appears to say that auditors would effectively have the right to determine who is or is not

"a fit and proper person"

in many circumstances. It is somewhat incongruous—to complete a point I made in Committee—that qualified auditors should have that kind of control over the members of SROs. The competence of an auditor, as defined for statutory purposes, is related to his qualifications under the Companies Act 1985, and that does not necessarily give him any right to determine a person's competence to give investment advice. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister is aware of my reservations, and I should be glad to hear his comments on that.

Mr. Howard: The broad content of these provisions has already been given to the House in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on 9 June. They are intended to provide a framework within which a constructive relationship between auditors and supervisors can develop, without undermining the auditor's relationship with his client or transferring

responsibility for regulation from the supervisor to the auditor. But the supervisor can do his job more effectively if communications with the auditor are facilitated so that the supervisor can benefit from the knowledge of an investment business which the auditor, in the course of his work, will develop.

Lords amendment No. 178 provides that rules may be made requiring those businesses authorised directly by the Secretary of State or under the clause 30 arrangement in the Bill to appoint an auditor. The intention is to ensure that all such investment businesses, however they are constituted, can be required to appoint an auditor who will be able to enter into that constructive relationship with a supervisor to which I have referred. Those rules will not apply to those investment businesses already required to appoint auditors under other statutes, such as the Companies Act. So this provision will apply to investment businesses which are not companies.

The new clause also sets out what the rules concerning the appointment of such auditors may contain. Their scope parallels those provisions concerning the appointment of auditors in the Companies Act. It is not intended that an entirely new set of provisions concerning the appointment and role of auditors should be created. There are some adaptations to those requirements for overseas businesses which are contained in the fourth new clause.

The power contained in the second new clause enables the Secretary of State to require a second examination of information supplied by a business on which an auditor has reported; it is intended to enable work of an apparently sub-standard nature to be checked by another person. That goes a long way towards meeting the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). This is not intended to reflect on the high standard of professionalism set by the major accountancy bodies in the United Kingdom. But the Bill does not enable the Secretary of State or agency to dictate who shall be an auditor of an investment business and there should be some route open to the regulator to take a second opinion if he has any suspicion about the data given to him.

The clause introduced by Lords amendment No. 180 concerns communication made by the auditor to the Secretary of State or, if appropriate, to an SRO or RPB. Information may be given at the request of the appropriate supervisor, in response to a question put by him or, occasionally, at the auditor's initiative. Usually such reports will be made with the knowledge of the business concerned—but on rare occasions it may be appropriate for the business not to be informed, for example, if senior management fraud is suspected.

The clause provides that the auditor in making such a report in good faith will not contravene any duty to which he may be subject. So the auditor will not be liable for any loss suffered as a result of his report. This provision is intended to remove any inhibition which an auditor might otherwise consider kept him from discussing matters with a supervisor.

It is intended that the circumstances in which an auditor should be expected to give information to a supervisor — especially on his own initiative — will be defined carefully. This will ensure that the individual auditor knows where he stands and will not feel obliged to volunteer much irrelevant information to the supervisor to safeguard his position. It is expected that these circumstances will be set out in professional guidance agreed between the supervisor and the professional bodies. I know that both sides are approaching the task of agreeing this guidance positively. Contravention of the terms of such guidance would be subject to whatever disciplinary proceedings the relevant professional body decided to impose.

In the event that some professional bodies do not want to or cannot agree on the terms of guidance, it will be possible for the Secretary of State to make rules, subject to affirmative resolution, specifying the circumstances in which auditors should communicate with a supervisor. If an auditor fails to make reports in accordance with these rules, he may be disqualified from auditing authorised businesses as laid down in the new clause introduced by Lords amendment No. 182. But I emphasise that this sanction applies when the auditor is subject to rules made by the Secretary of State and not when satisfactory guidance is given.

The Bill also makes provision for the auditors of insurance companies to report to the Secretary of State matters relevant to his function under the Insurance Companies Act 1981, in a manner parallel to that being introduced for matters covered by this Bill. The Government intend that there should be a broadly similar approach to the role of auditors across the financial sector.

The provisions which I have outlined will create the right relationship between auditor and supervisor and will contribute to the effectiveness of the regulatory system.

On the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), the auditor can give information to a supervisor if it is relevant to whether a person subject to supervision by that supervisor is fit and proper, but it will be for the supervisor to decide whether the person is fit and proper on the basis, among other factors, of the information supplied by the auditor.

Mr. Gould: I welcome what the Government have achieved with these new provisions. In broad terms, they have struck a sensible balance and have gone a long way towards resolving what has clearly been a difficult problem, not least for the professional bodies and for the accountants and auditors involved.

The first thing which the new clause embodied in amendment No. 180 does is to remove or set aside the duty of confidentiality. Clearly that is the first step that is required to remove what would otherwise be an obstacle to the auditor making any report to the supervisor if he considered that something was wrong.

I hope that the Minister can answer a question on subsection (2). That subsection, having removed the duty of confidentiality, goes some way towards putting in place a duty to report, but it does so by virtue of two separate provisions covering two separate circumstances: one where the recognised professional body lays down the rules and gives guidance to its members, and the other where the professional body does not do so and the Secretary of State has a reserve power.

What bothers me is that, in the first part of that subsection, the language is not that of duty. Where the rules are laid down, they are described as rules of guidance which specify circumstances in which matters are to be communicated. Later in the subsection, where the rules are imposed by the Secretary of State, the language of duty is used. That is a crucial question. Perhaps the Minister can assure me that the two parts are equivalent in this respect, but, if not, there is a problem. It is always a problem for

[Mr. Gould]

auditors, unless they are told that they must—in every circumstance—choose between the duty which they owe to their client and the duty which they owe to the supervisory authority. Unless that is made clear, not just in the rather exceptional circumstances where the Secretary of State imposes the rules, but in the more usual circumstances where the guidance is provided by the professional body, we may run into problems.

Will the Minister comment on that, or at least assure me that it is intended, and that the language secures the intention, that a duty should be imposed by those guidance rules issued by the professional bodies?

Mr. Howard: The answer to the point raised by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is to be found in subsection (2) of the new clause which gives the Secretary of State power to intervene if any auditor or class of auditor to whom subsection (1) applies is not subject to satisfactory rules made or guidance issued by a professional body.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords amendments to the Financial Services Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Lords amendments again considered.

Mr. Howard: The Secretary of State, in considering whether to exercise that reserve power, may have regard to the precise terms in which the rules made or guidance issued by a professional body are framed. He has the power to intervene and to make use of the reserve power if those rules and that guidance are not satisfactory. That encompasses the point made by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Minister. I do not doubt that that is his intention and the intention of the current Secretary of State. Of course, his statements to the House will be of no avail if the matter is ever litigated. As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the courts will restrict themselves to interpreting the words in the statute. I cannot see that the words in the statute secure the objective or the effect that the Minister described to us. I wonder whether he will consider that point further. If that is indeed the intention, I do not think that the words secure it.

Mr. Howard: I do not think that I can add anything to what I said previously. The Secretary of State must decide, in coming to a conclusion on whether he should exercise the reserve power that is provided, whether the rules or guidance are satisfactory from the point of view of the effect and purpose of the provision. If they are not, the Secretary of State has available the option of using his reserve powers which, as the hon. Gentleman concedes, give rise to an expressly provided duty. I suggest that the language used achieves the objective giving rise to the hon. Gentleman's concern.

Mr. Tim Smith: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lords amendment agreed to. [Special entry.]

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special Entry.

New Clause

ARRANGEMENTS TO AVOID UNFAIRNESS BETWEEN SEPARATE INSURANCE FUNDS ETC. 1982 C.50

Lords amendment: No. 211, after clause 115 insert the following new clause—

"(1) After section 31 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 there shall be inserted—

Arrangements to avoid unfairness between separate insurance funds etc.

31A.—(1) An insurance company to which this Part of this Act applies which carries on long term business in the United Kingdom shall secure that adequate arrangements are in force for securing that transactions affecting assets of the company (other than transactions outside its control do not operate unfairly between the section 28 fund or funds and the other assets of the company or, in a case where the company has more than one identified fund, between those funds.

(2) In this section—

"the section 28 fund or funds" means the assets representing the fund or funds maintained by the company under section 28(1)*(b)* above; and

"identified fund", in relation to a company, means assets representing the company's receipts from a particular part of its long term business which can be identified as such by virtue of accounting or other records maintained by the company.".

(2) In section 71(7) of that Act (which lists the provisions of that Act default in complying with which is not an offence) before the word "or" there shall be inserted the word "31A"."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Hon. Members may recall that in Committee I was concerned that we might be failing to establish a regime fully adequate to supervise the investment management of long-term funds of life assurance companies. I contended that that was not a negligible consideration, given that they manage the premiums of a large number of small savers and the premiums total, in aggregate, some £125 billion. It is of major importance that we should be satisfied as to the regime of investment supervision. The objective had to be to achieve—this is Professor Gower's phrase—the level playing field, the principle of equivalence of treatment which the Bill articulates.

I am grateful for the consideration that the Government gave to the amendments that I put forward. I accept that insurance policies are a distinct class of investment and that insurance is covered by a distinct body of law. I have noted the extensive analysis given by Lord Lucas of Chilworth in another place. I appreciate that amendment No. 211 provides that companies must have arrangements to ensure that they do not act unfairly as between different funds. That is an important point. I am grateful to the Government for introducing the amendment.

I note that the reports that companies are asked to make will be subject to audit. That is an additional valuable safeguard. It is fair to acknowledge, of course, that under the Insurance Companies Act and various EEC directives the solvency of insurance companies is regulated.

I come to a lingering anxiety. The monitoring of solvency is not the same as supervision to ensure that there is the best investment performance in the interests of investors. The United Kingdom Provident Institution

debacle demonstrates that even the monitoring of solvency can be somewhat laggardly, although it is fair to acknowledge that the Department spotted that problem.

Will the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State assure us that the Department of Trade and Industry will be empowered and directed to ensure that the investment policy of insurance companies aims consistently to achieve the best return for policy holders? Will the Department of Trade and Industry operate a regime of supervision of investment managers of the funds of long-term insurance policies that is truly comparable to the regime operated by the SIB and SROs in respect of investor protection elsewhere?

The principles of best execution, prohibition on dealing with connected persons and the maintenance of proper records should be common to investment managers wherever they operate. Will the regime that the Department of Trade and Industry will apply in the case of insurance companies be at least as rigorous as the regime that the SIB and SROs will operate elsewhere?

Mr. Howard: The amendment was a response to concerns put to us in Committee which arose from comments by the city capital markets committee. Unlike other forms of pre-packaged investments, such as unit trusts, policy holders of long-term insurance policies do not own the underlying assets. Instead, insurance companies own assets and manage the investments. Since they manage their own investments, it is not an investment business and is not covered by the Bill.

It was put to us that the economic realities of insurance companies, in managing their long-term funds, are managing the assets of their policy holders. If we broadly accept the justice of this argument, the purpose of the new clause is to cover the principal abuse that can arise when a fund manager has a number of investment clients. The clause provides that where an insurance company has identified funds in different parts of its long-term business, it must have arrangements to ensure that it does not act unfairly as between those funds. That will be a new provision in the Insurance Companies Act. It goes a long way towards meeting the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth).

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 212 to 339 agreed to.

Clause 154

BANKING BUSINESS

Lords amendment: No. 340, in page 126, line 32, after "5)(49" insert

"*,(Winding up orders)* (5)*, (Winding up orders: Northern Ireland)* (5)".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 341 to 343, 345, 346, 389, 443 and 505.

Mr. Howard: I hope that it will not come as too great a disappointment to those who have been waiting in anticipation for amendment No. 340, which I have been asked to open fully, if I begin by saying that the amendment and the others grouped with it are all relatively minor.

Amendment No. 443 to schedule 8 arises from the fact that a recognised SRO with potential or actual insurance company members has an additional requirement to take account in its rules of the regulation of insurance companies under part II of the Insurance Companies Act or the corresponding provisions in the law of another EC member state. That requirement might prevent an SRO from taking action against an insurance company because that action was reserved to the Secretary of State. Clearly it would be wrong if in those circumstances the SRO were liable for its inaction, and the amendment would grant it immunity from actions for damages in the discharge of those functions as for its other functions.

The other amendments are consequential on the new procedure for winding-up investment businesses introduced in Committee in another place or are consequential on an amendment made on Report in this House which moved the provision conferring immunity on the designated agency from schedule 7 to clause 156. Amendment No. 346 reflects the fact that arrangements made by a recognised clearing house for the monitoring function to be carried out by another person or body are entirely analogous to similar arrangements made under the relevant provisions relating to recognised self-regulating organisations, recognised professional bodies, registered investment exchanges and the designated agency.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 341 to 346 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 347, in page 127, line 9, at end insert—

"(6) A recognised professional body may make it a condition of any certificate issued by it for the purposes of Part I of this Act that neither the body nor any of its officers or servants or members of its governing body is to be liable in damages for anything done or omitted in the discharge or purported discharge of any functions to which this subsection applies unless the act or omission is shown to have been in bad faith.

(7) The functions to which subsection (6) above applies are the functions of the body so far as relating to, or to matters arising out of—

(a) the rules, practices and arrangements of the body to which the requirements in paragraphs 2 to 5 of Schedule 3 to this Act apply;

(b) the obligations with which paragraph 6 of that Schedule requires the body to comply;

(c) any guidance issued by the body in respect of any matters dealt with by such rules as are mentioned in paragraph *(a)* above;

(d) the powers of the body under the provisions mentioned in subsection (2)*(d)* above or under section *[Compensation fund]* (3) above; or

(e) the obligations to which the body is subject by virtue of this Act."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, in line 3, after "Act", insert

"or of any application for such certificate".

The amendment deals with immunity from action for damages of recognised professional bodies. We have been over that ground on several occasions before, so I shall not go over the history of the argument. At present under the Bill the SIB itself has an exemption from liability for damages, and so will self-regulating organisations in relation to suits or damages that might come from their own members or any member of the public.

It has always seemed to me that the logical provision for recognised professional bodies would have been to give

[Mr. Bruce Millan]

them exactly the same treatment as the self-regulating organisations, but we have been over that ground, as I said. I do not want to open up the argument again, except to say that I have never found the ministerial answers on that point at all persuasive. But we are now in a different situation because an amendment was moved in the other place earlier this week to provide at least immunity from suits, from actions by members of recognised professional bodies. The Government were not willing to accept even that, but there have been discussions with some of the professional bodies concerned, including the Institute of Chartered Accountants, and the Government have come up with an amendment of their own, No. 347. As I understand it, Ministers have been saying that it is not necessary to have anything of the sort in the Bill and that the certification procedure of recognised professional bodies is sufficient. As a non-lawyer, may I say that that seems a rather dangerous course. It means that professional bodies would be doing by their own rules what the Government and the House had specifically prevented them from doing, something which would have been subject to legal challenge. The professional bodies rightly said, "If it is to be done through the certification procedure, at least a procedure should be written in the Bill", and that is what we have in amendment No. 347. That is a summary of the history.

10.15 pm

The difficulty with the certification procedure is that it bites only when a certificate has been issued, and there may be a dispute between a recognised professional body and one of its members over whether a certificate should have been issued in the first place. In other words, the member may object that he has been refused a certificate. There is nothing in the new provision which would prevent him suing the professional body on that ground. As I have said, the provision will not bite in those circumstances. No certificate will have been issued and, therefore, the conditions will not be applicable.

I do not understand why the Government have been so stubborn over this matter and why they should not have had a provision for recognised professional bodies, even if it were limited only to immunity from suit from their own members and expressed in exactly the same terms the provisions that apply to SROs. The provision would be limited to the professional bodies' own members. That is what was attempted in another place at a late stage and the Government have not, for reasons which I find odd, been willing to go along that route. Instead, they have produced their own provision, which, unfortunately, I believe is defective.

The purpose of the amendment is to fill the gap that will be left if amendment No. 347 is accepted as it stands. I do not know whether the Minister believes that a recognised professional body should automatically give a certificate of authorisation to any of its members who apply for one, and who are only engaging in investment business within the scope of the authorisation of the recognised professional body, but I think that that would be too automatic a procedure. There are certain conditions which have to be met before a certificate can be issued, and that must be right. It must be right in terms of the Government's approach to these matters. If there are certain conditions to be met, there are bound to be circumstances in which a certificate will be refused to a member. A member may feel aggrieved in those circumstances and may wish to take legal action against the professional body. If we are not to give immunity from legal action generally, it should cover these circumstances, and that is the purpose of this minor and technical amendment to amendment No. 347.

Mr. Cash: I regard this provision as yet another sign of the slightly subordinate position, in a sense, which recognised professional bodies, including many distinguished chartered bodies, will face. I notice that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister is shaking his head, but there are distinctions in legal immunity which have to be considered. I can see some difficulties arising in the context of which the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) spoke. I ask for my hon. and learned Friend's assurance that this matter has been given the most careful consideration and that there will not be any problems arising in future.

Mr. Tim Smith: After long debates on this subject, I thought that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister might be interested to hear the legal opinion which my institute, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, has received. It deals with both members of the public claiming in respect of investments and practitioners. It reads:

"Our advice is that in the second category"—

practitioners—

"the Institute's exposure is very limited and can probably be eliminated by appropriate changes to its bye-laws. In the first category"—

investors—

"the legislation does somewhat increase the scope for actions against the Institute, particularly in relation to acts carried out in the course of investigating complaints. There are, however, few cases in which such actions seem likely to be successful."

I suspect that, after all the debates on this subject, the practical problems that will be created by the fact that my hon. and learned Friend has not been prepared to concede immunity to the recognised professional bodies, mainly because he was not happy about conceding it to the self-regulating organisations in the first place, will not be a great difficulty.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) for drawing that distinguished legal opinion to my attention. I was previously unaware of it, and I hope that it will go a long way to allaying some of the fears that have been expressed.

In regard to what my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said, it is not envisaged that professional bodies should in any way be subordinated to self-regulating organisations—they are simply different. If they were not different, the need for a separate regime would not have arisen. The differences are effected in several different ways in the Bill. They are not, for example, subject to the direct rule changing power of the SIB.

We have not imposed a similar condition on applicants for certification as the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) requests because we do not believe that that is necessary. A recognised professional body would not be required to subject applicants for certification to a fit and proper test—certification by a recognised professional body will be a much more straightforward matter than joining a self-regulating

organisation. The tests that the professional body would have to apply relate to easily established matters of fact such as whether the people managing and controlling the applicant are members of a professional body. In those circumstances, the risk of a certificate being refused on contentious grounds is very small, and there is no reason, therefore, to provide for immunity in such a case.

Mr. Gould: I hope that I shall not weary the House unduly if I remind hon. Members that the Opposition have been entirely consistent on this matter. It is the Government who have done a minuet around us and changed their stance almost entirely.

We have always argued that for self-regulating organisations, as for recognised professional bodies, some immunity is required, especially against their members, if they are not to be frustrated whenever they try to enforce the rules or conduct inquiries and investigations. We argued strenuously for that in Committee, and the proposition was equally strenuously resisted by the Government. We then discovered to our astonishment on Report that the Government had entirely shifted their stance. They had accepted our case for immunity against members and provided a blanket immunity for self-regulating organisations against everyone.

The change substantially alters the nature of self-regulation. Self-regulation was a means which, one assumes, was requested by many City institutions and interests, and by which the investor was to be protected. Self-regulation was touted as the best possible means by which investor protection could be secured, but we now find a regime in which the aggrieved investor, far from being protected, is denied a remedy against the regulatory bodies. That means that the self-regulation that the Opposition were prepared to accept as a desirable element in the regulatory structure has suddenly become an end in itself rather than a means to secure investor protection, and a fundamental objective of the Bill has somehow been lost from sight.

I shall take the example of the McDonald Wheeler and FIMBRA affair. It is clear that if the Bill were in force there would be aggrieved people who would have lost as a result of the McDonald Wheeler failure and who would perhaps not unnaturally — they would have every justification for it — seek a remedy against the self-regulatory organisation involved. As the Bill stands, they would be denied that remedy. I do not believe that that can be justified. For that reason, I am bound to make it clear, if I have not done so already, that this is one of those issues to which a future Labour Government will wish to return when they legislate anew on these matters.

I am aware that the amendment concerns recognised professional bodies I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) that at the very least it is important that, for reasons of consistency—I hope that I have established that we are consistent—we wish to argue, just as we did for the self-regulatory organisations, that recognised professional bodies should be protected for the same reasons against suit by their members.

I fully understand the Government's position, and the Minister was kind enough to talk to me and others about these matters within the last week or so. I know that what he is proposing, and will achieve by virtue of this amendment, is not a statutory immunity. He has removed any possible obstacles to achieving immunity by contract between recognised professional bodies and their members. The Minister feels that it is difficult to draw a line between investment business, which may be relatively marginal business, and the other professional activities of members of the bodies. I accept that the line is difficult to draw, but — I have made this point to the Minister before — that problem is not avoided by relegating the matter from statute to contract. The rules still have to do that job. Somehow or other, that line has to be drawn if an immunity is to be secured, so I am not particularly persuaded by that element in the argument.

I would go a little further. By relying on contract — in effect, by inviting the professional bodies to secure the position that they want to achieve through the contract — the Minister is giving insufficient weight to the different roles and interests of the recognised professional body as being the body exercising quasi-statutory if not entirely statutory powers of supervision and regulation, and its members. If the interests of the members at the point of joining and the interests of the professional body with the statutory duties laid upon it were identical, there would be no reason why the members should not readily accede to whatever contractual terms were required of them by the recognised professional body, but that is not necessarily the case. There may be a conflict between what the recognised professional body wishes to do in the interests of the profession as a whole and to secure for itself the role that it could conceivably fulfil under the legislation and the interests of the members who say to themselves, "Why are we signing away perfectly good legal rights simply as a condition of joining the body?" The Minister has left a problem for recognised professional bodies which might, in certain circumstances, be extremely difficult to resolve.

If this matter is to be satisfactorily resolved and the recognised professional bodies are to be given immunity, which I believe the Minister concedes that they will need if they are to do this job — one for which they have volunteered, but which is described and identified in statutory terms—they will need more than the ability to try to secure that objective through contract. They should be given clear statutory immunity. No other solution will achieve what is required.

I was persuaded by the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Govan that he had hit upon a weakness, even within the limits of the Government's proposal, in the amendment. The Government will be prudent, and I am sure that the advice of the recognised professional bodies would be to accept my right hon. Friend's amendment for the sake of preventing avoidable difficulties.

Mr. Ashdown: I support the point made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the requirement to place this immunity on a statutory basis. Although I regret that I did not hear the latter part of his speech, I had seen the amendment and I support the line taken by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan).

My view in Standing Committee—and it remains my view today — that to extend immunity from suit to members of the public and investors in the case of self-regulating organisations is going far too far. We were in favour of immunity from suit for members. The Minister will remember that we had long discussions about it. I was as astonished as the hon. Member for Dagenham when, following a long and strenous discussion one morning, this

[Mr. Ashdown]

point was given away. I still harbour the strong suspicion that, whatever the Minister may say to the contrary, it was given away more as a result of the pressure that was applied outside this Chamber than as a result of the arguments that he heard inside it.

10.30 pm

I recall that the Minister advanced a most remarkable new doctrine, especially for a lawyer. He said that since he had travelled in the direction that the hon. Member for Dagenham and I and others had recommended to him but had passed by our point and gone further, we should not complain; we should be doubly happy. I recall wondering at that time what the Minister's reaction might be if his wife came in with a broken car and said, "You told me to park the car in the garage, but you should be doubly happy because I went right through it and out the other side."

The Minister has gone far too far in providing immunity from suit in respect of members of the public. It amounts to a significant destruction of some of the advantages and rights that members of the public should have under the Bill. I do not go as far as the hon. Member for Dagenham. I do not say that automatically this means that we must move to a statutory system. However, it is a very bad move and it should be removed as soon as possible.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) raised four points, the last of which was endorsed by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). He rightly attributed to me the identification of the difficulties of definition of the boundary line between investment business that members of professional bodies might carry out, and their other professional activities, as one of the reasons why I was reluctant to provide statutory immunity from suit for professional bodies.

The hon. Gentleman is right that that difficult question of definition remains and that it is not avoided if statutory immunity is not provided, but he failed to recollect the point that I made when we met to discuss this matter: that it is a particularly difficult question of definition and that therefore it is more appropriate to leave it for resolution by the professional bodies and their members, because of the scope that they will have to adjust a definition in the light of experience than to enshrine such a definition in statute law. One factor is that it might be appropriate to draw a definition in a different place for different professional bodies. Therefore, the route that the amendment provides offers considerable advantages in relation to that point.

Mr. Cash: I have absolutely no basis for asking this question other than curiosity, but will my hon. and learned Friend tell us whether the professional bodies concerned have agreed to this provision? It is important to know whether the professional bodies agree with it.

Mr. Howard: I dare say they might have been happier with a different provision, but I understand that they regard this provision as acceptable and workable.

The hon. Member for Dagenham sought to widen the discussion somewhat by suggesting that the effect of this provision was, in some very serious way, to deny remedy to investors. It is important to understand that investors will not be deprived of remedy. They will still be able to sue an authorised person if he breaches the rules that apply to him, and they will have access to the compensation arrangements, where appropriate. Those compensation arrangements are specifically designed to favour small, private investors. Therefore, I do not believe that the interest of such investors will be seriously affected by the immunity granted under this clause, or under other clauses.

The hon. Members for Dagenham and for Yeovil have always failed to take properly into account the extent to which regulatory action by self-regulating organisations might be inhibited if they were liable to suit by investors. Investors do not simply and exclusively consist of Aunt Agatha, an investor who became fondly known to us during our discussions in Standing Committee. Investors will include large and powerful concerns which might well be prepared to use the threat of legal action to inhibit effective regulatory action by self-regulating organisations. That justified the extension of the immunity for those organisations.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) descended into the detail of the likely reaction of members of professional bodies. I do not share his analysis, because one can possibly divide those members into two categories. There will be those anxious to take advantage of the ability to carry out investment business by being authorised through membership of a professional body. They will have every incentive to enter into an agreement of that kind with the professional body in order to encourage the professional body to become recognised. The other category of members may have no interest in carrying out investment business. Equally, it will be in their interests to confer this power on their professional body because it will mean that they will be much less likely to be held liable at the end of the day to contribute to any liability incurred by that professional body.

Mr. Gould: There is at least the possibility of a third category, professional men carrying out investment business. They may be unwilling to accept, if one tries to impose it on them, a contractual term which denies them remedies against a recognised professional body. Therefore, they would prefer to go for direct authorisation. Would the Government be neutral on that?

Mr. Howard: I do not entirely follow that argument, since direct authorisation would be a matter for the Securities and Investments Board or designated agency and they would have immunity. The people about whom the hon. Gentleman spoke would be no better off by taking that route. There is no way in which there would be an advantage in terms of securing less immunity by following any of the other routes. The third category of member of a professional body identified by the hon. Gentleman will not exist. For all those reasons, Lords amendment No. 347 provides a satisfactory balance and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Millan: I am not convinced that the Minister could not quite easily have accepted my amendment which would have improved the Lords amendment. However, it is rather pointless to carry on the argument at this hour and at this stage in the Bill. At least amendment No. 347 as it now stands represents some movement on the part of the Government and we must be a little grateful for that. I beg to ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Further consideration of Lords amendments adjourned.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

To be further considered tomorrow.

West Fife District General Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

10.38 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I should like to point out a slight change in the motion before the House. The subject of the debate should be the future development of the west Fife district general hospital and not "Fife West" as on the Order Paper.

I am pleased to see in his place the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay). He has been translated from responsibilities that he had for the Health Service in Scotland to another post and his place has been taken by Lord Glenarthur. I understand that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary is answering questions on health matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and I met the hon. Gentleman to discuss this matter.

It is with some diffidence that I raise this matter in the House. It involves some detail and trying to achieve a balance of advantage between certain areas in Fife and other areas outside Fife. It concerns the inter-relationship of the Scottish Home and Health Department with a health board and the health board's area of responsibility. As a Member of Parliament, I have some diffidence about intervening in these activities. I hope, therefore, that I will not bore the House by going over some of the background as I try to set the scene as to what is agreed and where the areas of disagreement may be between the Scottish Home and Health Department and the health board in Fife.

I do not think that there would be any disagreement about the shortage of acute beds in Fife. My information is that—and I accept that these are broad brush figures — between 5,000 and 10,000 patients a year have to travel out of Fife for hospital attention. My argument is based on statistics furnished by the health board. There is a requirement, in terms of acute bed provision in Fife, for 938 beds. That is the total requirement for Fife.

I am not trying to play my area off against any other area, but in Dunfermline we have certain additional disadvantages in relation to the shortages of acute beds. The problems lie in the fact that there are three different hospitals which cater for specific services: Milesmark, Dunfermline and west Fife hospital and the Dunfermline maternity hospital. That leads to an unsatisfactory situation as there is a duplication of services and unsatisfactory and old facilities.

The health board naturally desired to rationalise the position and to concentrate activities on one hospital in Dunfermline. In 1983, the health board tried to resolve the position by making an earnest attempt to examine the overall position and, coincidentally, to determine the content and progress of the acute bed facilities in Dunfermline under the phase II development in the new west Fife district general hospital. I make no criticism of the Government's overall strategy. They have tried to re-allocate the resources within hospital expenditure in Scotland and, instead of being one of the disadvantaged areas, Fife has begun—and I say that diffidently—to receive fairer treatment.

I have referred to 1983. After many years of unproductive discussion about the new acute hospital for Dunfermline, it became apparent to the board in 1983 that the effort should be made to reach a decision which would lead to approval being given by the Scottish Home and Health Department to the building of a new acute hospital in Dunfermline. That building project was of such a magnitude that it would have to be funded centrally by the Treasury. To obtain approval in principle from the SHHD, the board was obliged to carry out two procedures. As far as I understand it, that was unique. The board was the first to carry out these procedures, what is called an option appraisal exercise and the preparation of an approval in principle submission. These are technical terms and I do not understand the details except to say that the option appraisal exercise consumed a great deal of valuable time — about 18 months — of highly paid officials within the board and elsewhere.

Arising from the option appraisal scheme there were five options available to the board. One was to cater for the facilities outside the Fife area and another was to do so within the Fife area. Both options were dismissed for obvious reasons. The options were narrowed to two. Option C was based on an equal distribution of facilities and option D on the balance of population.

On 26 June 1984 the board decided to proceed with option C on the basis of advice from the building division that developing the Victoria hospital site was not feasible. I do not want to interfere with any of my hon. Friend's constituency, but that was the advice from the building division. Option D involved a third set of theatre suites. On balance it was decided to proceed with option C in Dunfermline.

One would have thought that everything was set and that the Fife board could proceed with option C, subject to other approvals being granted. However, in late autumn 1985 the board received a development plan for the Victoria hospital from the building division which had stated earlier that it would be inappropriate to develop the Victoria site further. The building division suggested that a fairly large new building might be built. Further investigations suggested that it might be possible to provide a larger development, contrary to what had been stated previously by the building division.

I do not know about the Minister, but I have seen a sketch plan which reveals a weird and wonderful development and which opened up further study. Advances in engineering and technology could make what was not possible in 1983-84 possible in 1985. Anyway, the hospital board found that it was impelled, if not compelled, to go through the exercise of evaluating whether it was technically possible to expand the Kirkcaldy site.

Initially the Scottish Home and Health Department raised a number of queries about the phase II development of the west Fife district general hospital, to which answers were given. Information was given to the SHHD about the feasibility of a larger development on the Victoria site at Kirkcaldy. In April 1986 the Department wrote to the board stating that as there had been recent indications from the building division that further development at Victoria hospital might be feasible, a more detailed study of the apparently abandoned option D—or something like it—was required and it requested a study to be carried out, having regard to capital cost and revenue consequences. This study has been embarked upon.

I may not have entirely accurate information—I do not wish to mislead the House—and I apologise to the

Minister but I am told that, in broad ball park figures and capital costs, there is little to choose between option C and option D. We are talking about figures of between £28 million and £30 million either way. Although full studies have not been completed, there is little to choose, in revenue terms, between the options.

My information is that, on Friday 24 October, the Fife health board's senior officers met with officers of the building division of the Common Services Agency to discuss the studies in relation to the design and capital costs involved in option C at the Victoria site and the option D implications of the west Fife district general hospital site. This meeting was reported to the Fife health board on 28 October and there will be a further meeting to discuss the matter.

I apologise to the House for the time I have spent in setting out the background. What is at stake is the delay and the disadvantage to constituents — not only mine but constituents throughout Fife.

If Treasury money is involved or Treasury sanction is required, it is right that we should go through an evaluation exercise. I do not question that—indeed that would defeat my purpose. The evaluation exercise has been carried out but it has been reopened on the basis of what I consider to be a very flimsy overture by the building division and its architects.

No conclusion has been obtained on the basis of a capital evaluation and no conclusion has been obtained on the basis of a revenue evaluation. To put it crudely, we are back to political pressures and a balanced judgment of what could be done on a green field site in Dunfermline and what can be done on a rather congested site in Kirkcaldy. These are value judgments. I believe that the best organisation to assess these judgments would be the Fife health board. I appeal to the Minister to make it clear that, at the end of the day, which I hope will be soon, we will not have any pressures exerted by the Scottish Home and Health Department on the health board, through various political channels, to accept something which the health board does not want.

The health board is strictly adhering to option C, which it initially embarked upon. Other factors interpose themselves. Due to the shortage of acute beds in Fife, many people in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East and other hon. Members have to travel either to Tayside or to the Lothians. We await an evaluation of the cost of option C from the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Recently we met Lord Glenarthur and he said that he hoped that this "delayed" survey on the cross-boundary flows would be done quickly. In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East and myself on 22 October he said:

"On the matter of cross-boundary flow, I must emphasise that Fife Health Board's proposals for West Fife District General Hospital Phase II, together with the option appraisal were only submitted to the Scolttish Home and Health Department in January of this year."

We do not necessarily accept that stricture.

The assumption on the part of the Fife health board was that, having assessed option C, the exercise of cross-boundary flow was one that it should not concern itself with. However, the letter went on:

"The work on cross-boundary flow could not, therefore, have commenced prior to that time, as it was not known what the Board's proposals were."

We dispute that. The letter also states:

"Assuming the Health Board are able to resubmit their proposal to me before the end of this year, I would still hope to be in a position to make a decision early in 1987."

We welcome that. However, I must emphasise that the major concern is delay.

I hope that the Minister will accept that what I have said is said with sincerity. Our concern is about the injection, late in the day, of another survey. The Fife health board was the first to go through an option appraisal scheme. I submit that to open the argument again, however persuasively it may have been put — initially I was not persuaded on the basis of an architect's flimsy drawing—involves delay. That has a cost that no one has been asked to evaluate. Delay involves suffering to people in Fife, especially people in my constituency, who expect to have their needs in terms of acute beds satisfied.

We are talking about getting something done that should have taken anything up to nine years. My estimation is that, because of the delay, it will be the year 2000 before the problem is resolved. I know that the Minister has difficulties and I understand the problems of intervening. However, I am asking for an assurance that he will give resources to the Fife health board to expedite this and that the board will be left to make the judgment at the end of the day as to what is best for the people of Fife and what the distribution of hospital services should be between one part of the board's area and another. I earnestly look forward to the Minister's reply.

10.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) has illustrated his concern about the delays in building a new acute hospital in Dunfermline. I can understand that. As he mentioned in his speech, he and his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who I see is in the Chamber, came to see me while I was the Minister responsible for health and we discussed this matter. I know that they have been to see my noble Friend the Minister of State who has taken over those responsibilities at the Scottish Office and have expressed to him their concern about the delays.

I am afraid that, as I and my noble Friend have said, we cannot agree that the board ignored the new evidence which came to it affecting the choice of the site that it would develop when considering a new hospital investment in Fife amounting to many millions of pounds. I do not think that the board or the Scottish Home and Health Department could have ignored what they heard from the building division. They had to look at the implications of that advice and at the implications for the adjoining health boards of any proposals to build a new hospital in Fife.

I shall describe the acute hospital provision in Fife at present and why the Fife health board wishes to provide replacement and additional accommodation. I shall simply be underlining something that the hon. Gentleman and I agree upon, which is that new hospital accommodation is needed in Fife.

At present there are some 793 acute beds in Fife, the main concentration being at the Victoria hospital, Kirkcaldy, with 365 beds, and a scattering of eight small and medium-sized hospitals, some in less than ideal condition, making up the balance. The total number of 793

[Mr. John MacKay]

compares with anticipated needs in 1991 of 918 acute beds. The number of acute hospital beds in Fife is therefore significantly short of the number required. At present, the shortfall is in large measure compensated by treatment provided for Fife patients in Edinburgh by the Lothian health board.

Fife health board wishes substantially to reduce the cross-boundary flow. The board is also concerned that the proliferation of small units of existing accommodation in Dunfermline and the Kirkcaldy area needs to be rationalised. In 1983 the board embarked on an option appraisal. The hon. Gentleman used the word "unique". It was not unique — it was the first detailed option appraisal on that scale. Now it is a routine procedure. Option appraisal is an important procedure to determine where we should put major capital investments and how best we can make those investments for the benefit of the service into the future.

I do not want to repeat what the hon. Gentleman said because I want to try to put the main points in my speech. However, he mentioned the options. Option A involved closing a number of acute beds at Dunfermline and substantially increasing the number of patients treated in Lothian. That, for obvious reasons, was rejected.

Option B was essentially a "no change" option. Facilities at Dunfermline would be upgraded and the cross-boundary flow to Lothian slightly increased. Fife health board rightly decided to reject that option.

Option C involved a large new hospital at Dunfermline, with the existing acute hospitals there closing down, and a smaller extension to Victoria hospital, Kirkcaldy, replacing the beds at Cameron, Hunter and Randolph Wemyss. It was thought that that option would substantially reduce cross-boundary flow to Lothian.

Option D would provide rather less development at Dunfermline but correspondingly more at Kirkcaldy. The fifth option, option E, envisaged substantial development at Kirkcaldy and very little at Dunfermline, with cross-boundary flow to Lothian increasing slightly.

Options E and D were quickly ruled out because of what were thought at the time — April 1983 — to be insuperable difficulties on the Kirkcaldy site. In April 1984 option A was also dropped because it would have caused revenue problems for Fife and also, of course, because of the inconvenience to patients and relatives travelling to Edinburgh. Furthermore, it was thought that Lothian health board would have considerable difficulty in absorbing a large increase in acute patients. Option B was rejected as failing to meet the problem, leaving option C as the board's preferred solution.

In December 1985 the board presented a submission to the Department for approval in principle to build a second phase of west Fife district general hospital, providing 432 beds. That was followed in January 1986 by the board's option appraisal document. However, at that time it became apparent that further development at Victoria, Kirkcaldy, in addition to the 102 beds proposed by option C, might in fact be possible. That followed on advice provided by the building division of the Scottish Health Service Common Services Agency. It was clear that the board would have to look again at what facilities might be provided at Kirkcaldy, and that option D need not have been deleted purely on the ground that it was not feasible to build additional accommodation at Kirkcaldy.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East) *rose*——

Mr. MacKay: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, although it will probably mean that I shall not be able to cover all the points.

Mr. Brown: I want to comment on the precise point which has led to the further consideration of option D. It seems that it was pointed out that it might have been technically feasible to build on the site. Is the Minister aware that the board rejected option D not only because it doubted the technical feasibility but because it regarded the proposal, which would involve three theatre sites, as — to use the board's words — "totally impractical"? Therefore, whether or not the site was technically feasible for building was not the major or only issue in the board's decision when it rejected option D. Why, then, is the board being forced to go through a technical submission on option D when it is clear that it rejected that option as being totally impractical even if technically feasible?

Mr. MacKay: I was not present to hear the board's deliberations. It may not have been the only reason for rejecting option D, but if one is told that there are insuperable building difficulties, that must be a principal reason. One may not like what flows from that, but one does not pass that hurdle if advised that there are insuperable difficulties.

Both hon. Members told me that they would have preferred it if those insuperable difficulties and that position had remained. I understand that point, but we have reached the stage where it appears, from advice from the building division, that it would be possible to provide such facilities at Kirkcaldy. Both hon. Members have asked me why the new advice meant that the board's appraisal of the options had to be reconsidered. It is now clear that further development is feasible at that site, and the board and the department thought that it should be explored. The building division has produced a design solution for the Victoria site which is being considered by the board.

I have already stressed the importance of a proper appraisal of options when dealing with capital expenditure. If Fife health board had ignored the new evidence about building possibilities at Kirkcaldy, the basis of the decision-making process leading to the approval in principle submission for phase 2 of the west Fife district general hospital would have been substantially undermined and there could have been no confidence in the board's conclusion. The board was well aware of that. Hon. Members have not sought to introduce into the debate the conflicts between different areas in Fife, but that problem also existed and those who were keen on the Kirkcaldy solution became aware of the possibility of option D, which the board agreed to reconsider. It was not just a matter of the Scottish Home and Health Department delaying matters by telling the board that option D would require further investigation. The board itself first brought the revised development potential of the Victoria site to the attention of the Department.

The building division has produced a design solution for the site and comparative figures for the costs of the two options. I can confirm that the latest advice from the building division is that option D is unlikely to cost more in capital terms than option C. That is also contrary to what was originally believed. Indeed, when hon. Members

visited me they put that view to me. At the time, I thought that that might be the likely outcome, but that has not been the case. Indeed, option D may be cheaper.

Similarly, preliminary information from the health board is that the revenue costs of one option are unlikely to differ significantly from those for the other option. The service implications of option D as opposed to option C are less easy to assess, and I understand that the board is working on them at the moment. Therefore, it does not expect to make a fresh submission to the Department on phase 2 of the hospital before December this year. Of course, there is no longer a possibility that the board can apply to the Department requesting that option D should be dropped on cost grounds. I informed the hon. Gentlemen of that possibility when I met them, but we know that it is no longer a possibility. That means that the board will have to make decisions about the merits of both schemes, if the financial aspects are equal.

I do not have time to deal with the cross-boundary flow. It is a factor, but it will not cause any delay——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eight minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 31 October 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Visas

9.35 am

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I wish to present a petition which has been signed by 382 residents of the city of Birmingham protesting about the racist visa regulations introduced by the Home Secretary and praying that

"the Hon. Members of the House of Commons should ask the Secretary of State for Home Affairs to withdraw these restrictions which will bring distress to many British families."

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Financial Services Bill

Lords amendments further considered.

New Clause

DATA PROTECTION

Lords amendment: No. 348, after clause 158, insert the following new clause—

An order under section 30 of the Data Protection Act 1984 (exemption from subject access provisions of data held for the purpose of discharging designated functions conferred by or under enactments relating to the regulation of financial services etc.) may designate for the purposes of that section as if they were functions conferred by or under such an enactment as is there mentioned—

(a) any functions of a recognised self-regulating organisation in connection with the admission or expulsion of members, the suspension of a person's membership or the supervision or regulation of persons carrying on investment business by virtue of membership of the organisation;

(b) any functions of a recognised professional body in connection with the issue of certificates for the purposes of Part I of this Act, the withdrawal or suspension of such certificates or the supervision or regulation of persons carrying on investment business by virtue of certification by that body;

(c) any functions of a recognised self-regulating organisation for friendly societies in connection with the supervision or regulation of its member societies."

9.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The Data Protection Act 1984 recognised that special provision had to be made to restrict access of persons to data concerning them, held in connection with the regulation of financial services, otherwise an individual could use his rights of access under the Act to find out what information about him was held by the regulators and, thus forewarned, cover his tracks and make the conclusive uncovering of the malpractice more difficult.

The new clause makes it clear that data held by self-regulating organisations and recognised professional bodies for the purpose of their regulatory functions as recognised bodies may be exempted by order under the provisions of section 30 of the Data Protection Act from its subject access provisions.

Mr. Brian Gould (Dagenham): I am grateful to the Minister for that somewhat brief explanation of the new clause. I think that both sides of the House would concede that this is a considerable derogation from the principles laid down in the Data Protection Act, which was a major step in advancing civil liberties in Britain. Therefore, we are obliged to look rather carefully at any substantial exception of this type which is introduced so soon after the passage of the Data Protection Act.

Labour Members' concern is increased by the fact that the new clause was introduced and passed after a brief debate in another place. I mean no criticism of their

[Mr. Brian Gould]

Lordships, and I well understand the pressures under which they worked, but we should linger a little before accepting the new clause.

I can focus my anxiety by asking a specific question. I accept the general explanation and justification that the Minister has offered for the new clause, but why is it not possible simply to rely on section 28 of the Data Protection Act, which I understand already makes an exception in the case of material, the disclosure of which might be prejudicial to the detection, prosecution and conviction of a criminal offence? In other words, I think that the Minister is suggesting something which goes wider than the exceptions already claimed by the police and the Inland Revenue, and so on, which are limited to cases where a criminal offence may have been committed or be about to be committed. The Minister should offer a word of explanation about that.

Mr. Howard: With respect, the more relevant provision of the Data Protection Act is section 30. Section 28, as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has suggested, deals with exemptions from the Act in relation to prosecution, but section 30 specifically deals with the regulation of financial services and is, therefore, the most relevant section to this question. It follows from that that the principle of exemption under the Data Protection Act in relation to the regulation of financial services was recognised at the time that the Act was passed, so no new principle of any sort is involved in the amendment.

We are merely seeking to modify the application of the principle which was enshrined in that Act to the regulatory structure which is provided by the Financial Services Bill, which was not foreseen in its detail during the passage of the Data Protection Act. The purpose of the provision is to extend and modify section 30 of the Data Protection Act so that it more precisely meets the regulatory structure provided by the Bill, without in any way extending or introducing a principle other than the principle which was recognised in that Act.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 159

OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEMES

Lords amendment: No. 349, leave out clause 159.

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 350.

Mr. Howard: This amendment reflects the result of consultations on the Bill's provisions in relation to occupational pension schemes. The reference in the existing clause 159 to management "through" an authorised person has caused some uncertainty, and some have questioned the position of trustees of occupational pension schemes. The new clause clarifies the requirement to be authorised. A person, such as a trustee, who is responsible for the management of investments held for the purposes of an occupational pension scheme will not be required to be authorised if he delegates day-to-day management of those assets to an authorised, exempted or overseas person. This does not mean that he would have to distance himself entirely from the management of the assets. He would still be able to take what might be called strategic decisions, for example, about the proportion of the assets which should constitute investments of particular kinds, or the desired balance between growth and income and, indeed, his responsibilities as a trustee might require him to do so. Similarly, a trustee would not need to be authorised simply because the person managing the scheme's assets was required to consult him from time to time in particular circumstances, for example, where there was a takeover bid, where the manager had a conflict of interests, or where the transaction in question was particularly large. But a trustee would be required to be authorised if he regularly exercised discretion as to the sale or purchase of a particular investment.

The new clause also makes it clear that the requirement to be authorised in subsection (1) overrides, where necessary, the exclusion for trustees in paragraph 20 of schedule 1. If a trustee actively manages the assets of the pension scheme, he will have to be authorised even if he satisfies the conditions set out in paragraph 20.

Subsection (3) allows the Secretary of State to exclude certain managers of certain types of occupational pension schemes from the scope of subsection (1), and hence from the requirement to be authorised. It has been suggested to us, particularly in the context of small self-administered pension schemes approved by the Inland Revenue, that the provisions of the clause are inappropriate to some types of small schemes because they are effectively under the control of their members. I cannot at this stage say precisely which classes of scheme will be excluded under this provision. Clearly, approved, small, self-administered schemes are strong contenders, although the Government will wish to consider carefully whether all such schemes or only classes of them should be excluded. We should also want to consider whether the pensioner trustees of such schemes should continue to be required to be authorised. There may also be other classes of scheme in respect of which the power should be exercised.

I should stress that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will need to consider carefully whether a scheme which is not managed by an authorised or exempted person should be able to contract out of the state earnings-related pension scheme under the new arrangements to be introduced under the Social Security Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 350 and 351 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 352, in page 129, line 39, leave out from "authorised" to end of line 40 and insert

"or exempted person in the course or for the purpose of engaging in any activity falling within paragraph 12 of Schedule 1 to this Act with or on behalf of the person by whom or on whose behalf the deposit is made or any activity falling within paragraph 13, 14 or 16 of that Schedule on behalf of that person.

(2) Subsection (1) above applies to an exempted person only if the activity is one in respect of which he is exempt; and for the purposes of that subsection the paragraphs of Schedule 1 there mentioned shall be construed without reference to Parts III and IV of that Schedule.

(3) This secion is without prejudice to any exemption from the said Act of 1979 which applies to an authorised or exempted person apart from this section."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

It is clearly essential that where the carrying on of investment business necessarily involves what, given the broad definition in the Banking Act 1979, must also be

regarded as the acceptance of a deposit, it must be the regime to be introduced under this Bill and not the inappropriate regime of the Banking Act which applies. However, the clause as originally drafted arguably went too wide, in that it could have permitted authorised persons to finance their business by means of an otherwise unconnected deposit-taking business without seeking the proper authority under the Banking Act. While it would have been possible to deal with this matter in the rules governing authorised persons, we think that it would be preferable to limit the exemption from the Banking Act on the face of the Bill. That is the first object of the amendment.

The second object of the amendment is to ensure that exempted persons, who will need to accept deposits for the same reasons as authorised persons, will also benefit from a similar exemption from the Banking Act.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 353, in page 131, line 35, leave out from "In" to

"(duty" in line 36 and insert "paragraph (4) of Article 195 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986".

9.45 am

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 354 to 365, 371 to 373, and 376.

Mr. Howard: These are technical amendments to adapt the Bill to take account of the different company law provisions in Northern Ireland. Amendment No. 376 is also a technical amendment. An amendment was introduced earlier to provide a definition of the exempt interests of recognised market-makers which will not be notifiable under sections 198 to 210 of the Companies Act 1985, but the corresponding provision for Northern Ireland was omitted. This amendment makes good that omission.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 354 to 365 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 366, in page 132, line 34, leave out "or for the benefit of" and insert

", and involving the acquisition of beneficial ownership of those shares by,".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 367 and 368.

Mr. Howard: These amendments are technical. The first closes a potential loophole which might have allowed assistance to be provided for purposes other than the acquisition of beneficial ownership of shares. The second modifies the definition of "connected company" in subsection (3). The third brings Northern Ireland company law into line with the Companies Act as amended by this clause.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 367 to 377 agreed to.

Clause 171

SERVICE OF NOTICES

Lords amendment: No. 378, in page 139, line 26, at end insert

", the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies or the Registrar of Friendly Societies for Northern Ireland".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment adds the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies and his Northern Ireland equivalent to the Secretary of State as persons who are excluded from the provisions of clause 171 on the way in which notices may be served under the Bill.

There are separate statutory provisions for serving notices, not only on the Secretary of State, who is consequently excluded from the scope of clause 171, but on the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies or the Registrar of Friendly Societies for Northern Ireland. This amendment corrects that omission from an earlier version of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 379 to 381 agreed to.

New Clause

PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Lords amendment: No. 382, after clause 172, insert the following new clause:—

(1) The Secretary of State may publish information or give advice, or arrange for the publication of information or the giving of advice, in such form and manner as he considers appropriate with respect to—

(a) the operation of this Act and the rules and regulations made under it, including in particular the rights of investors, the duties of authorised persons and the steps to be taken for enforcing those rights or complying with those duties;

(b) any matters relating to the functions of the Secretary of State under this Act or any such rules or regulations;

(c) any other matters about which it appears to him to be desirable to publish information or give advice for the protection of investors or any class of investors.

(2) The Secretary of State may offer for sale copies of information published under this section and may, if he thinks fit, make a reasonable charge for advice given under this section at any person's request.

(3) This section shall not be construed as authorising the disclosure of restricted information within the meaning of section 149 above in any case in which it could not be disclosed apart from the provisions of this section.

(4) The functions to which section 96 above applies shall include the functions of the Secretary of State under this section."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 506 and 520. I must inform the House that amendment No. 382 involves privilege.

Mr. Howard: The new clause has been prepared in accordance with an undertaking given to a noble Lord on the Opposition Benches. It confers on the Secretary of State the function of publishing information and giving advice about the way in which the Bill operates and other specified matters. The functions will be transferable to the designated agency in the normal way.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): This is an extremely helpful provision and I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for explaining how it came about. I had some misgivings when I heard that it arose from an undertaking given to a Member of the Opposition, but in view of the good relationship that we built up in Committee, it would be unfair to dwell on that point.

Will my hon. and learned Friend consider encouraging consultation—which I understand will be with the SIB in this case—between those who will be giving the information and those who will be affected by it? If there is consultation about the manner in which information and advice are to be given before the rules are drawn up, they are more likely to be readily understood by the public, and that is the purpose of the exercise. In practice the provision will prove important, and the more consultation there is before the information and advice are drawn up, the better.

Mr. Gould: I endorse the comments that have been made about the value of the amendment, and I thank the Minister for introducing it. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the provenance of the new clause adds to its charm.

Mr. Howard: As consultation has been our watchword throughout the passage of this legislation, it would be churlish to do anything other than to respond in the most positive fashion to the invitation extended to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). I am delighted that his initation has been endorsed by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), and I agree with what they have said.

Question put and agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 383 to 390 agreed to.

Clause 173

INTERPRETATION

Lords amendment: No. 391, in page 143, line 32, after "cent." insert "or more"

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment corrects a defect in the definition of "comptroller" for the purposes of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

GIBRALTAR

Lords amendment: No. 392, after clause 173 insert the following new clause—

" .—(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, section 30, 53(1)*(c)*, 78 and 111(2)*(c)* and *(d)* above shall apply as if Gibraltar were a member State.

(2) References in those provisions to a national of a member State shall, in relation to Gibraltar, be construed as references to a British Dependent Territories citizen or a body incorporated in Gibraltar.

(3) In the case of a collective investment scheme constituted in Gibraltar the reference in subsection (3)*(a)* of section 78 above to a relevant community instrument shall be taken as a reference to any Community instrument the object of which is the co-ordination or approximation of the laws, regulations or administrative provisions of member States relating to collective investment schemes of a kind which satisfy the requirements prescribed for the purposes of that section.

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such provision as appears to him to be necessary or expedient to secure—

(a) that he may give notice under subsection (2) of section 78 above on grounds relating to the law of Gibraltar; and

(b) that this Act applies as if a scheme which is constituted in a member State other than the United Kingdom and recognised in Gibraltar under provisions which appear to the Secretary of State to give effect to the provisions of a relevant Community instrument were a scheme recognised under that section.".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The new clause makes provision for investment businesses in Gibraltar. It treats Gibraltar as if it were a member state of the EC in its own right. We believe that such a course is the only one that is consistent both with Gibraltar's position under the treaty of accession, since for financial services Gibraltar is effectively part of the EC, and with Gibraltar's constitution, under which it enacts its own legislation.

Mr. Gould: Simple curiosity leads me to ask whether any attempt was made to consult the Spanish authorities about this.

Mr. Cash: I wanted to ask that question, too.

Mr. Howard: The answer is no.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule 1

INVESTMENTS AND INVESTMENT BUSINESS

Lords amendment: No. 393, in page 146, line 7, leave out paragraph 1 and insert

"Shares and stock in the share capital of a company."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 394 to 401, 405 to 409, 412, 414 to 419, and 421 to 426.

Mr. Howard: This rather large group of amendments contains several detailed amendments to the definition of investment business in schedule 1. They have all been made in response to concerns expressed about the wording of the schedule. Indeed, some of the amendments fulfil Government commitments made in the House when particular concerns were expressed.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): What is the difference between shares in the share capital of a company and stock in a company, and shares and stock in the share capital of a company?

Mr. Howard: I am not sure that I can give a sufficiently authoritative exposition of that distinction immediately. As I am sure that my hon. Friend would not want any answer that was not entirely authoritative, I shall reply to him as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Why did the drafting on that point result in so much confusion? Is the same true of other provisions, in that the way in which they were worded has led to this large block of amendments?

Mr. Howard: In the Bill as originally drafted, we adopted definitions which we thought were appropriate, but we always recognised that it would be necessary to

consult further — consultation preceded publication of the Bill—with those engaged in day-to-day dealings with these various instruments in the markets, who are in the best position to know exactly how the definitions formulated in the legislation should apply to their activities. The Bill is an excellent example of the way in which we are prepared to learn from those who have the knowledge that cannot possibly repose within the confines of Government, and to respond constructively to representations made so as to ensure that the definitions in the legislation correspond as effectively as possible with the realities of practices in the market place. That is why these amendments have been introduced, and I make no apology for them.

Mr. Gould: Nevertheless, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) has made a serious and valuable point which is very much in line with some of the opening remarks made by hon. Members yesterday.

The Bill is the culmination of a long process. The Gower report was commissioned in 1981, I think; there was then a long inquiry by professor Gower, followed by a White Paper and then the Bill. The Bill has now been discussed for nine or 10 months. Yet the House is still struggling to deal with so many late amendments. Why is that? I entirely accept that these are essentially technical matters, drafting problems, and so on, and that the Government have striven hard to get them right. Yet despite all the preparatory work which has gone on for so long we still face this difficult situation. I do not entirely blame the Government, because they have done all that they could, but why have City interests come forward so late in the day squealing, as it were, that they would be hurt by a badly drafted provision? Why were they not brought in or induced to make those points much earlier, when the House and the Committee could have considered them properly?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me another opportunity to expand on that point. It is not a question of people not having been brought in or encouraged to comment earlier. Extensive consultation took place with affected interests. As I shall demonstrate, it is not only the City which has come forward late with suggestions. Extensive consultations took place during the preparatory stages of the legislation, before publication of the Bill. The Bill was published last December, so there was every opportunity for affected interests to come forward. I am not in a position to say why, in many cases, they came forward later rather than earlier, but it was not for lack of any contact, invitation or encouragement on the part of the Department and its officials.

A particularly good example is provided by the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), to which I can now give a more authoritative answer. I do not know whether he will find it particularly illuminating, but it is a good example of the consultation that has taken place. We do not think that amendment No. 393 makes any significant difference to the text of the original Bill, but the Law Society came along at a late stage and said that it believed that the wording provided in amendment No. 393 was clearer than the original wording. Opposition Members paid tribute to the Law Society yesterday and it is sensible to pay serious regard to the Law Society's representations. When the Law Society comes to us, at however late a stage, and suggests that an alternative formula provides greater clarity, even if that extra clarity is not immediately obvious to us, and as no detriment could be caused, we try to respond favourably and positively. That is why amendment No. 393 has been proposed. It is a good and typical example of the way in which the consultation processes work.

10 am

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that he can make a further contribution only with the leave of the House. I hope that we are not to have a protracted debate about consultation methods or their absence.

Mr. Gould: I was hoping to intervene in the Minister's speech. However, I ask the leave of the House. I was interested in the Minister's concluding remarks. Does he accept that we are talking about a novel principle for legislation? Apparently one can add words to a Bill, however meaningless they may seem, provided that they do not actually do anything.

Mr. Howard: That is not quite what I said. I did not suggest that the words to be added to the Bill are meaningless. I said that the extent of the additional clarity which they provided was open to dispute and question. The words are certainly not meaningless. They are meaningful, but whether they are more meaningful than the original words is open to doubt. So as to be certain that we take full advantage of the Law Society's learning, I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Cash: The amendments emanate from the Law Society, of which I am a member. I was concerned to hear that the amendments were suggested so late in our proceedings. We received late amendments during the Committee stage and I had to raise the matter with the Law Society.

I take your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about not going on about consultation, but this Bill is important and it has been essential to give Ministers and others as much time as possible to consider all aspects. Amendments which arrived late made that difficult for members of the Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Pavitt: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should be grateful for your advice. I have been in the House for a long time, but today I have been faced with a new situation. A total of 581 Lords amendments are before the House. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have just ruled that an hon. Member, having spoken on a group of amendments, must seek the leave of the House if he wishes to speak again. If an hon. Member has spoken about one amendment in a group of 10, is he precluded from speaking again on another amendment in the group? Do we have to deal in one intervention with all the amendments in the group or are we able, if we accept one amendment, to talk about another amendment in that group? After all, we might wish to divide the House on one of the other amendments. For me, your ruling is unprecedented.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the difficulty of considering a large number of amendments. One of the purposes of Mr. Speaker's selection of amendments,

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

putting like amendments in a group, is to enable us to debate them together. Having participated once in a debate on a group of amendments, an hon. Member can speak again only with the leave of the House.

Lords amendments Nos. 394 to 401 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 402, in page 147, leave out lines 36 and 37 and insert—

"(2) A contract shall be regarded as made for investment purposes if it is made or traded on a recognised investment exchange or made otherwise than on a recognised investment exchange but expressed to be as traded on such an exchange or on the same terms as those on which an equivalent contract would be made on such an exchange.

(2A) A contract not falling within Note (2) above shall be regarded as made for commercial purposes if under the terms of the contract delivery is to be made within seven days."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 403 and 404.

Mr. Howard: These amendments are the result of very helpful advice that we have received from the commodity and futures exchanges and the banks which do business both on such exchanges and off-exchange.

The original provisions in the Bill do not, we now acknowledge, fully deal with contracts made off a recognised investment exchange, albeit on the same terms as those of contracts made or traded on such exchanges or even where they are expressed to be traded as such. The futures exchanges expressed their concern that without an amendment there would be a possibility of abuse by unscrupulous, unregulated brokers. We share that fear. We do not wish to see futures contracts being offered to the public on the standard terms of a recognised investment exchange where the broker has managed to avoid authorisation — and regulation — simply by designating those off-exchange contracts as having a "commercial purpose". The amendment would deal with that problem.

A further point that arose during discussions was the question of "spot" contracts. It was proposed that spot contracts — sometimes also called "cash" contracts — should be excluded from the definition of "futures" when made off a recognised investment exchange even though such contracts bear many of the characteristics of futures. For example, the Bill currently defines a contract as a "future" where, inter alia,

"delivery is to be made at a future date".

We are agreed that the purpose of entering into a sport contract is to obtain possession of the property in question not, as is the case with "futures", to assume or to transfer the risk of commodity price changes. This is already the import of note 3(b) of paragraph 8, but it is obviously desirable to put this beyond question. This is done by the addition proposed at paragraph (2A) by amendment 402.

I now turn to the effect of note 3(c) of paragraph 8 of schedule 1. I can confirm that it never was the Government's intention to catch within the definition of "futures" any physical forward delivery contracts which are entered into for commercial purposes. The problem stems from a possible interpretation of note 3(c). We have given an assurance to the physicals markets associations which publish standard terms on which their members enter into contracts, including the British Bankers' Association and the Grain and Feed Trade Association, that the provisions relating to "futures" were not meant to extend to the foreign exchange, bullion or physical commodity dealings of their members when made for commercial purposes. Accordingly, to make this clear, the amendment to note 3(c) makes the provision a one-way indicator, the presence of which suggests a commercial purpose but the absence of which suggests nothing.

Finally, I turn to amendment No. 404. We have accepted that by no means all futures contracts require that a price is agreed upon when the contract is made. We have been advised that contracts are frequently made between brokers and "clients" expressed as a contract between principals under which the price is determined by the price at which a subsequent matching contract is executed by the broker on the market floor. Furthermore, it is common practice in some futures markets to allow quality and quantity tolerances to determine the price in the event of delivery. The provisions that we have added as a new note 5 take account of these matters.

Mr. Gould: I thank the Minister for that explanation of some important and useful changes to the schedule. They certainly help to make clear the new regime which is to apply to some important and relatively novel forms of trading.

I asked the Minister a question in Committee to which I am certain he gave me a satisfactory reply, but I cannot remember it. The amendments deal with passages in paragraphs to the schedule which are sometimes preceded by the heading "Notes". Why is that, and does the heading make any difference to the status of the provisions?

Mr. Howard: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall respond to the question of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). The hon. Gentleman's surmise of the import of the explanation which I gave in Committee and which he failed to recollect is correct.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 403 to 409 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 410, in page 149, leave out lines 32 to 35 and insert—

"*Investment advice*

15. Giving, or offering or agreeing to give, to persons in their capacity as investors or potential investors advice on the merits of their purchasing, selling, subscribing for or underwriting an investment, or exercising any right conferred by an investment to acquire, dispose of, underwrite or convert an investment.";

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment narrows the definition of "investment advice" in response to concerns that certain types of advice had inadvertently been included. It may be helpful if I mention some of the main aspects in which the definition has been narrowed. First, to be within the new definition, advice would have to be given on the merits in the recipient's capacity as an investor of buying or selling the investment or doing any of the other things specified in the amendment. This would exclude, for example, advice about tax or the legal consequences of buying an investment. Secondly, advice about classes of investment as opposed to particular investments would not be caught. Thus general advice that life assurance was a safer investment than commodity futures would not rank as investment advice, but a recommendation to buy a

particular policy would. Thirdly, advice about the exercise of rights conferred by investment would fall within the definition only if the rights concerned were rights to buy, sell, underwrite or convert an investment. This makes clear that advice to vote for the election of a particular director at a company's annual general meeting, for example, would not be caught.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Minister for introducing the amendment. I am sure that it is a well intentioned attempt to deal with the problem which exercised my noble Friends in another place, but I am not necessarily convinced that "merits" has exactly the effect that the Minister claims. I concede, however, that these are difficult drafting matters and I can only join the hon. and learned Gentleman in hoping that he has managed to make the distinctions clear in the form of words chosen.

Mr. Tim Smith: I have listened carefully to what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has said about the way in which the definition has been narrowed. When I read the amendment I thought that there were two ways in which it had been narrowed. First, advice has to be given on the merits. Secondly, advice has to be given to persons in their capacity as investors. I may have missed the explanation, but I do not understand the consequences of bringing that phrase into the paragraph. Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend will provide some explanation.

Mr. Howard: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall respond to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). I suppose that if advice were given in a purely academic context as part of a seminar for academic purposes, where those receiving the advice were not investors or potential investors, that might be one example. It is not, however, the example that has been drawn to my attention on a piece of paper that has just been passed to me. That does not necessarily mean that it is not an apposite example.

An example which may be even more apposite relates to advice on the merits of taxation, for instance, which ties in with the capacity of the person to whom the advice is given. In those circumstances, that person would not be regarded as an investor or potential investor.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 411, in page 150, line 4, leave out paragraph 17 and insert—

"17.—(1) Paragraph 12 above applies to a transaction which is or is to be entered into by a person as principal only if—

(a) he holds himself out as willing to enter into transactions of that kind at prices determined by him generally and continuously rather than in respect of each particular transaction; or

(b) he holds himself out as engaging in the business of buying investments with a view to selling them and those investments are or include investments of the kind to which the transaction relates; or

(c) he regularly solicits members of the public for the purpose of inducing them to enter as principals or agents into transactions to which that paragraph applies and the transaction is or is to be entered into as a result of his having solicited members of the public in that manner.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1) above "buying" and "selling" means buying and selling by transactions to which paragraph 12 above applies and "members of the public", in relation to the person soliciting them "the relevant person", means any other persons except—

(a) authorised persons, exempted persons, or persons holding a permission under paragraph 21A below;

(b) members of the same group as the relevant person;

(c) persons who are or propose to become participators with the relevant person in a joint enterprise;

(d) any person who is solicited by the relevant person with a view to—

(i) the acquisition by the relevant person of 20 per cent. or more of the voting shares in a body corporate (that is to say, shares carrying not less than that percentage of the voting rights attributable to share capital which are exercisable in all circumstances at any general meeting of the body); or

(ii) if the relevant person (either alone or with other members of the same group as himself) holds 20 per cent. or more of the voting shares in a body corporate, the acquisition by him of further shares in the body or the disposal by him of shares in that body to the person solicited or to a member of the same group as that person; or

(iii) if the person solicited (either alone or with other members of the same group as himself) holds 20 per cent. or more of the voting shares in a body corporate, the disposal by the relevant person of further shares in that body to the person solicited or to a member of the same group as that person;

(e) any person whose head office is outside the United Kingdom, who is solicited by an approach made or directed to him at a place outside the United Kingdom and whose ordinary business involves him in engaging in activities which fall within Part II of this Schedule or would do so apart from this Part or Part IV.

(3) Sub-paragraph (1) above applies only if the investment to which the transaction relates or will relate falls within any of paragraphs 1 to 6 above or, so far as relevant to any of those paragraphs, paragraph 11 above.

(4) Paragraph 12 above does not apply to a transaction which relates or is to relate to any other investment and which is or is to be entered into by a person as principal if he is not an authorised person and the transaction is or is to be entered into by him—

(a) with or through an authorised person, an exempted person or a person holding a permission under paragraph 21A below; or

(b) through an office outside the United Kingdom, maintained by a party to the transaction, and with or through a person whose head office is situated outside the United Kingdom and whose ordinary business is such as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (2)*(e)* above".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 413 and 420. I have to inform the House that amendment No. 420 involves privilege.

Mr. Howard: This group of amendments makes important changes to the definition of investment business in schedule 1. Important though the changes are, however, they are changes only at the boundaries. They would not affect the position of mainstream investment business. Definitions are notoriously difficult, especially in a Bill of this sort, as are decisions about the precise boundaries of areas to be regulated. The House will recall that one of the major conclusions of the Gower report, on which much of the Bill is based, was that the definition of investment to which existing law applied was outdated and too narrow and that a much broader and more flexible definition was needed. Accordingly, the Bill as presented included wide definitions of investment and investment business, which in turn proved to be too wide in some respects.

10.15 am

Particular concern was expressed by the Confederation of British Industry and the Association of Corporate Treasurers, among others, that a number of industrial and commercial companies would come within the definition of investment business as the Bill was originally drafted. These are not the type of companies to which the Bill was intended to apply. Their investment activities are only peripheral to their main commercial activities and they generally confine themselves to the professional market place and do nothing which affects the ordinary investor. This group of amendments is aimed at meeting the remaining concerns without at the same time creating loopholes which could be exploited by the unscrupulous. The amendments look and are extensive, but I emphasise that they are concerned with the detailed definition of the activities to be regarded as investment business. Mainstream investment activities are not affected.

Amendment No. 411 removes paragraph 17 and replaces it with a new paragraph, but that does not reflect any fundamental change in the philosophy underlying the paragraph. It is still concerned with dealings by a person as principal and the changes made are mostly detailed ones. Perhaps I should comment particularly on the change which will have the effect that a person will not be required to be authorised to solicit shareholders for the purpose of acquiring a strategic stake in a company. The effect will not be to allow such solicitation to take place without any controls. Unauthorised as well as authorised persons would be subject to the rules in clause 51 on unsolicited calls. Investment advertisements will be subject to controls under clause 52. The only effect, therefore, is that a person will not be required to be authorised solely by virtue of his regularly soliciting persons for this particular purpose.

The basic principle underlying new paragraph 18A, which is introduced by amendment No. 413, is that nothing which is done between companies in the same group or between participators in a joint enterprise is to be regarded as constituting investment business. In considering transactions between any member of the group or participator in the enterprise and a third party, any transaction into which a member or participator enters on behalf of another member or participator is treated as though it were entered into by him as principal.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will my hon. and learned Friend explain how minorities would be protected under these provisions? A group may consist of subsidiary companies, all of which are not necessarily wholly owned. How will minority shareholders be protected from investment advice that is taken in the group?

Mr. Howard: I do not think that the issue of minorities arises in this context. We are concerned with a company which engages in activities in which it would normally engage as a principal. If an offer is made on behalf of a company to shareholders in another company for their shares, we are concerned with whether the company should be deprived of its exclusion from the Bill's provisions by virtue of the fact that it is acting on behalf of other companies in the group and not only as a principal. That is why I say that I do not think that the protection of minority shareholders arises in this context. Minority shareholders have the benefit of the protection that is afforded by the general provisions of company law.

Amendment No. 413 introduces paragraph 18B, which is concerned wth sales finance. Export finance in particular, especially where large sums are required, frequently involves the use of instruments which fall within the definition of investments. The attractiveness of the financial package associated with an offer to supply goods or services is frequently an important consideration for the customer. Many industrial and commercial companies have developed in-house expertise to assemble these packages rather than relying on external financial advisers.

The amendment is intended to exclude such operations from the requirement to be authorised so long as certain conditions are complied with. The principal condition is that the activities would be excluded only if they were engaged in for the purpose of or in connection with the sale or supply by the supplier of particular goods or services or related sale or supply. It may be helpful to explain the concept of related sale or supply. A construction company, for example, may contract with a customer to build a power station, the turbines of which are to be sold direct to the customer by a third party. The sale of the turbines would be a related sale or supply and activities engaged in by the construction company in connection with that sale would benefit from the exclusion provided.

The second main condition is that where the provision of sale finance involves the supplier acting as the customer's agent in dealing with the outside world, the supplier can gain the benefit of the paragraph only if he confines himself to activities which, if he were dealing on his own account rather than as the customer's agent, would themselves be excluded from the definition of investment business.

These two amendments will, we believe, solve most of the problems which have been raised with us on behalf of industrial and commercial companies. None the less, there will remain a few such companies whose activities will still be substantial enough to require them to be authorised. In most cases these companies will deal only with similarly sophisticated companies and with professionals in the investment markets. Amendment No. 420 therefore provides a procedure for exempting such companies from the requirement to be authorised. Exemption can be granted only if the conditions in subparagraph (3) are met. In particular, it is expected that permissions granted under the paragraph will be limited to persons who do not deal with members of the public.

Amendment No. 420 does not lay down any procedure for the grant or withdrawal of permissions and leaves scope for the exercise of considerable discretion as to the grounds on which a permission is granted or withdrawn. I believe that this flexibility to be desirable, given the problem which the provision is designed to solve, but the absence of settled procedures and criteria should not be taken as an indication that the power will be exercised in an arbitrary manner.

I would expect the Secretary of State or designated agency to make public the guidelines which he or it would follow in deciding whether to grant or to withdraw a permission under the paragraph, and also to institute administrative arrangements so that decisions were taken on a reasonable timescale. Certainly, in considering any proposal that powers should be transferred to a designated agency, the Secretary of State will wish to consider carefully the availability of such guidelines and how it is proposed that the powers under this paragraph should be exercised.

Mr. Gould: The Minister's explanation of the measure shows that he has made a valiant attempt to meet the concerns of the CBI, the Association of Corporate Treasurers and others about the difficult definitional problems. I have no quarrel with what the Minister has sought to achieve. I share his hope that the provisions will secure that objective. The only observation I make is that, as in so many other of the difficult problems with which the drafters of the Bill have had to deal, we must realise that dividing lines drawn now and which look appropriate now could well be inappropriate in changing circumstances.

One has only to reflect on the fact that many industrial and commercial companies in today's unhappy climate are having great difficulty in making profits on their mainstream operations. Many remain in profit only by virtue of the activities of their corporate treasurers in dealing with money markets, foreign exchange markets, and so on. It would be relatively easy for some of the companies which might be affected by the provisions to slip from one category to the other—in other words, to become less industrial and commercial companies and more financial companies. We must watch that carefully.

The dividing line between what is incidental investment business and what is mainstream business must be watched, as the position can change, as is the case with the other dividing line with which amendment No. 420 is designed to deal. The problem has also arisen in other respects—for instance, whether an investor or someone engaged in the investment business is dealing with other professional investors in every circumstance. The procedure which the Minister has outlined, which is represented in amendment No. 420, gives the requisite flexibility. The Minister and his successors, whichever party is in government, will have to watch those matters carefully. It is worth recording at this point that changes may have to be made frequently.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Can my hon. and learned Friend say whether new paragraph 17(1) *(c)* would remove any protection for the general public against being cascaded with misleading information about investment in unsound schemes, such as the construction of the Channel tunnel?

Mr. Pavitt: I hope that the Minister will forgive me for my ignorance in seeking an explanation of new paragraph 17(1)*(b)*. I am more at home in talking about the National Health Service than I am in the stratosphere of high finance. I am sure that all hon. Members will understand my asking: how does a principal hold himself out to be engaged in either investment or speculation? What process must he go through if he is to conform to the strictures contained in the new paragraph? Since my days on the stock exchange floor there have been gigantic changes. For example, the position of a principal who is a jobber or a broker has altered recently.

New paragraph 17(1)*(b)* relates to a person buying investments with a view to selling them. He is really buying to make a profit. The Minister said that there were two processes—one involving people who are in the business purely for making a quick profit and turnover, and those, such as borough treasurers, and so on, who are in the market for investment purposes. Does the Bill cover a person buying for a profit and selling subsequent to a rise? Does it include the position of a principal engaged in speculation and selling shares, stock, debentures, or any other form of negotiable security in the hope that before he comes to settle he can buy them back—in other words, the bear position rather than the bull position? Does new paragraph 17(1)*(b)* cover both those positions? Or does it cover only the person who speculates to make a profit by buying cheap and selling dear, and not the other way round?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) will appreciate how severe the temptation is for me to be drawn into extensive discussion on the Channel tunnel project and how unwise it would be for me to succumb to that temptation. I content myself with the observation that the protections of clauses 51 and 52 will still be available, as I said in opening, and I think that that provides the answer to the general point that he raised.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) referred to the concept of "holding oneself out". That concept is reasonably well recognised in law. It is not a novel creation of this legislation, and it would not be a difficult concept for the courts to interpret in the context of the legislation. Those who make markets, who use the new technology in the stock exchange and who take advertisements in newspapers will readily be seen to be holding themselves out. I do not think that any difficulty should arise about that concept.

My initial reaction to the hon. Gentleman's second point — it is not for me to give a definitive interpretation, as ultimately that will be a matter for the courts—is that the bear position to which he referred would be covered by the provision in the same way as other intentions would be.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 412 to 419 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 420 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 421 to 430 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 431, in page 155, line 20, leave out from "include" to end of line 21 and insert

"a number of persons independent of the organisation and its members sufficient to secure the balance referred to in subparagraph (1)*(b)* above.".

10.30 am

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

It has always been the Government's intention that the persons responsible for making and enforcing the rules of a self-regulating organisation should include a sufficient number of persons independent of the organisation and its members to secure a proper balance between the interests of the organisation or its members and those of the public. During the debate in another place on the Bill it was suggested that the link between the sufficient number and the balance to be achieved was not expressed clearly enough. This amendment makes clear what is meant by "sufficient" in this context.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 432, in page 155, line 24, at end insert—

"(2) The arrangements may make provision for the whole or part of that function to be performed by and to be the responsibility of a body or person independent of the organisation."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

[Mr. Howard]

The amendment makes it clear that it is open to a recognised self-regulating organisation to establish, possibly in conjunction with other RSROs, an independent mechanism, such as an ombudsman scheme for the investigation of complaints against the organisation or its members. However, this mechanism would not be able to exercise the enforcement or disciplinary functions of a self-regulating organisation, which would remain the SRO's responsibility.

Generally speaking, if a function is carried out on behalf of a self-regulating organisation, the ultimate responsibility remains with that organisation. If the function of investigating complaints is carried out by an independent body, it may help to underline that very independence if responsibility is transferred as well. This would be important in a case in which a complaint is made against the organisation itself rather than one of its members.

Mr. Cash: I am glad to hear the Parliamentary Under-Secretary make that point. It will help considerably in cases in which, for example, bodies might otherwise be unreasonably and unfairly blackballed, because members of that organisation will have an opportunity to make representations. On the point about the cosy club, on which there are differences of opinion, only time will tell. It is possible for circumstances to arise in which somebody who is not regarded with the same favour in some circles as others would find himself excluded, perhaps unreasonably. In those circumstances, rather than having to go through the courts, he may be able to take advantage of this provision. Will the Parliamentary Under-Secretary confirm that that is what he has in mind?

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will the Parliamentary Under-Secretary enlighten us as to why this clause is permissive rather than mandatory?

Mr. Howard: I am happy to confirm that the effect of the clause as drafted will cover the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

The point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) was carefully considered. We took the view that there was no need to make this provision mandatory. It may be that in a particular case an external investigation service, or at least an external element, would be preferable, but if a wholly internal investigation service can provide adequate protection for investments, I cannot see why it should be ruled out. The key point is that the Secretary of State or designated agency will have to be satisfied that the arrangements are effective, whether they are internal or external.

If an investor is aggrieved at the result of the self-regulating organisation's investigation, he can refer his complaint to the designated agency. The agency, by virtue of paragraph 4 of schedule 5, will need to have arrangements for investigating complaints against authorised persons and against SROs. If amendment No. 439, to which we are about to turn, is agreed, those arrangements will be required to include in appropriate cases arrangements for the independent investigation of complaints against authorised persons. Therefore, the Bill provides a means whereby a person who is dissatisfied with a self-regulating organisation's investigation of his complaint can have his complaint investigated by somebody independent of the organisation. Consequently, the requirement that each self-regulating organisation should have its own ombudsman is unnecessary.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 434 to 436 agreed to.

Schedule 5

Qualifications of Designated Agency

Lords amendment: No. 437, in page 159, line 11, at end insert—

"and the composition of that body must be such as to secure a proper balance between the interests of persons carrying on investment business and the interests of the public.".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the amendent in the name of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown).

Mr. Howard: Lords amendment No. 437 is similar to the one concerning the composition of governing bodies of self-regulating organisations, which has already been agreed to. The schedule also provides that the members of the governing body of the designated agency must be drawn from persons having experience in investment business and other persons as described in the schedule. This amendment provides that the composition of the body overall must be sufficient to ensure a proper balance between the interests of those who carry on investment business and those of the public. That has always been our intention. The amendment makes it an express requirement.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, at the end, add

'by ensuring that at least one third of the members of the body are independent non-practitioners'.

I begin by declaring an interest as an adviser to Barclays bank. These matters involving independent representation on the SIB have been examined at some length in Committee and in the other place. I do not wish to detain the House too long. The final stage of the Bill provided us with another opportunity to be more precise about the representation on the SIB of people independent of City interests, the lay people referred to by various hon. Members. It will help to sustain public confidence in the body if there is a more precise definition of the independent representation on the SIB. We welcome the change that the Government introduced in the other place in amendment No. 437. Clearly, that matches the other position, which we have accepted, of the SROs.

We still believe that this key body, which stands at the pinnacle of the supervision of the new City regime, should have independent representation on it. We should like to pin down the Government and the SIB on the scale of representation. In the amendment, we suggest that at least one third of the members of the SIB should be independent. As there have been debates about the definition of members, we have defined them as independent non-practitioners. I hope that the proposal, which is more precise than the amendment from the other place, will meet with some support in the House, and that

the Government will say that their intention is that there should be very strong representation of consumer interests on the SIB.

Mr. Gould: I, too, welcome the Lords amendment, as I welcomed the similar amendment concerning self-regulating organisations. I have some sympathy with the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Stockton (Mr. Wrigglesworth). However, the difficulty is that, whenever one specifies a particular number or proportion, there is a tendency to regard it as a maximum rather than a minimum. There are also possible grave difficulties in deciding into which category individuals fall. Although I strongly sympathise with the amendment, I realise that there may be objections to it.

I welcome the notion that the public interest should be directly represented and recognised in this way and that a proper balance should be established. It would be helpful if the Under-Secretary of State would say a little more about exactly how that is to be done. What is his concept of the public interest? How are people to be appointed to represent that interest? Are they, as is sometimes suggested, to be appointed because they represent a range of identifiable interests—professional lobbying interests, as it were—or are they to be selected as being genuinely representative of the public at large, and, if so, on the basis of what qualities?

The Minister suggested in a discussion with a deputation from my union, the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, that he would be looking to the personal qualities of appointees and, although it may be fairly obvious, I wonder whether he can say what those qualities might be. Will he also say whether he has any intention of recognising the legitimate interests of a body of people whose interests are very often overlooked, especially in the selling of life insurance by way of investment business? We have looked long and hard at many of the questions involved there but few people have spoken on behalf of the sales force on the ground, especially in the case of home service insurance sales. Is there any intention on the part of the Minister to allow for the representation of that sort of group on the SIB?

I also wish to ask the Minister a wider question about the general way in which appointments are to be made by focusing on a specific instance. The Minister will recall that there were some reports during the summer about an appointment which the Minister wished to make but did not make. That was the appointment of John Kay, who is a well-known and well-established reputable economist, who was at that time the director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies. As far as I am aware, he has no obvious political affiliations and, if they do exist, they are certainly not with my party. I should also say that I have never discussed this matter with John Kay and I do not raise it at his instance.

John Kay appeared to commend himself to the Minister. I am not obliged to make any case for him but, as I understand it, the Minister had accepted that there was a good case for appointing him to the SIB. My information is that what then happened was extraordinary. The Minister was summoned to the Treasury by the Chancellor. I do not know what happened at that meeting, whether it took place in the Treasury or in other circumstances. However, as far as we can tell, John Kay has not been, and is not to be, appointed to the SIB.

The House is entitled to some sort of explanation as to why that is so and how it happened. Was it that some deep, dark and dreadful secret was revealed of which the Minister had been unaware and which served to disqualify John Kay, or was it an even more unattractive proposition, that in some sense he was regarded as having been the originator of advice, forecasts and reports that did not please the Chancellor and was being blackballed for political reasons? That would be even more disturbing. In either case it is curious, to say the least, that the Treasury was involved at all. This is a Department of Trade and Industry Bill and appointments are to be made jointly by the Secretary of State and the Governor of the Bank of England. Where does the Treasury come into the matter? We are constantly told that the SIB is a private body and is to be independent of the Treasury. That is the whole point. Indeed it is the only, and flimsy, point for allowing it to retain that status. Yet, if the reports I have received are correct, the Chancellor is intervening in the most direct and negative way in the matter of appointments to the board.

The Minister must confirm that story or deny it. If he cannot do either of those, we are left with a worrying situation. The Bill is not as it has been presented to us until now. It casts not only an adverse light on prospects for the way in which the measure will operate but forecasts a gloomy setting for the way in which the Government do their business.

10.45 am

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I regard this as the most important amendment that we will consider today. I do not think that we should let this opportunity pass without probing the Minister and debating the criteria and qualifications of members of the SIB. This amendment is more important than the one that we passed earlier concerning the composition of SROs, for while each SRO will determine its own way and have a variable example in terms of the independent and lay membership, in this instance we are debating the principal supervisory body for the framework of regulation that we are establishing under the Bill.

It is important that we get the right people and the right proportion of people on the SIB to fulfil the best intentions of the legislation. A company, body or institution is only as good as the people in it, and much of the import and effectiveness of the legislation will depend upon the assiduity, integrity and lay composition of the SIB.

In Committee we had an important debate on this subject when I brought into question the role of the Governor of the Bank of England acting jointly with the Secretary of State, or under designation, the chairman of the SIB, to appoint——

Mr. Tim Smith: That is not correct.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is right. That power cannot be designated to the SIB. I brought into question the duty of the Governor of the Bank of England to act jointly with the Secretary of State in appointing the chairman and members of the SIB. I expressed reservations about what I regarded as the continued encroachment—I do not use that word too pejoratively—of the Bank of England outside its area of prudential control of the banking system into supervisory control of the investment markets. Historically, one understands, in the absence of any other body or responsibility, the need for the Governor to do so However, with the new body in

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place, and the legislation enacted, it should be the right of the Secretary of State alone. I do not say that he should not consult the Governor of the Bank of England, but it should be his right to appoint the chairman and, in consultation with him, to appoint the members of the SIB.

In the extent to which we allow the absolute right of the Secretary of State to be diminished by having to obtain the approval of the Governor of the Bank of England, thereby providing the Governor with a veto over what the Secretary of State might like to do, we are denying ourselves, as democratically elected representatives, and the Government of the day, the opportunity to do what we and they consider to be right. I hope that the Governor and the Secretary of State will always act with a similar outlook. However, there must be a reason for the requirement that the decision should be a joint one. That reason must be that there will be certain instances in which we are prepared to see the Governor of the Bank of England operate a veto.

I still take the view that the Governor should not be able to operate such a veto. We should have the confidence in our legislation to say that whatever changes of Government or changes in the complexion of Government there may be in the future, we must not detract from the right of Secretaries of State who are appointed by the House to make important decisions which affect the overall government and supervision of the City of London. I have that reservation. I am unhappy that under this legislation, as it will undoubtedly go through, the Governor will continue to have a role in deciding how many lay members there should be on the board and what proportion of the total they should comprise.

I have a good deal of sympathy with the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) in the absence of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). It follows a similar debate in Committee. I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), that once one prescribes a certain proportion it becomes the maximum rather than the minimum. However, the amendment makes it clear that it is at least a third. The problem is that we may not even get a third if we do not at least have an undertaking or if the amendment is not put into the Bill.

The SIB has announced a good many of its members, including some lay members, representatives from the Consumers Association and some ostensibly lay members. I have my doubts as to how lay they are. Many of them, as with other bodies, are highly institutionalised individuals and will not be there to do what I would like lay members to do, which is to represent the interests of investors in as objective a way as possible.

That is a very important point which we should reiterate, because the whole purpose of the Bill is about investor protection. It is not about making the City run more smoothly or about making the city more profitable. It is not about exclusively trying to deal with some of the worst problems that have been identified in the mechanics of the City in recent years. Its principal objective is to update antiquated legislation on investor protection and ensure that the latter is more adequately safeguarded in the brave new world of finance in which people will operate.

Given that situation, it should be uppermost in our minds, and in the mind of the Governor and of the Secretary of State at every stage in conducting their responsibilities according to the legislation, that they should enhance investor protection. In deciding the composition and individual membership of the SIB, the criterion above all others, the first to be considered, must be whether it will enhance investor protection. I pay tribute to the Wilson committee's report, which gave prominence to the inadequacy of lay representation on City institutions. My criticism, which I have expressed on numerous occasions over the years, has always been that it has not been adequate in ostensibly self-regulating organisations in the past. Even now I am uncertain and remain suspicious about the extent to which, once the Bill passes through Parliament, we shall have incisive, determined objective lay representation on the SIB and, indeed, the SROs underneath it.

Despite the undoubted ability and integrity of our present Governor, I do not have great confidence that, if he acts jointly with the Secretary of State, people of that quality will be imported. That is another reason why I bring into question the right of the Governor to be involved in the decision. After all, I do not think that anyone would seriously suggest that the governorship of the Bank of England or the membership of the board of directors of the Bank of England should be subject to a decision jointly between the chairman of the SIB and the Chancellor. That will not be so. We are talking about the laying down of a pecking order in the City, which the Governor and the officials in the Bank of England wanted to make clear at the outset so that, in the end, the bank remains paramount and retains its supremacy in that and other matters. I am not satisfied that that is necessary or in the interests of investors in general.

As has been mentioned by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and others in the debate, the critical factor will be the quality of the people on the board and the qualities that the Secretary of State will be looking for in appointing them. I hope that they will be genuinely lay people who have not had too much experience of the investment market, although I understand that some of the decisions in which they will have to be involved will be complex. Nevertheless, I hope and believe that lay representation will be able to engage in and contribute to such decisions, and with some ability.

I also hope that lay representation will not be, as it were, passengers from organisations outside the City, who feel that they represent consumer interests. Obviously there is somebody there from the Consumers Association, and probably that is a good thing, but I do not necessarily believe that individuals who may have a myriad other responsibilities, whether in consumer protection, business or industry, should be appointed just because it looks good. There are too many boards on which there are people with eminent names, who are undoubtedly people of integrity and are respected, but the fact is that they do not have the time to instigate particular areas of inquiry and fulfil the responsibilities that we want from lay membership.

I should like to see a little bit of daring in the appointments. I should like to see the appointment of lay people whom we have never heard of before, who will give of their time and use their ingenuity and imagination to follow up lines of inquiry or suspicion——

Mr. Cash: We might even see some Members of Parliament.

Mr. Nelson: I do not rule out jobs for the boys. Perhaps we should discuss that openly. I can think of few people who would make better members of the SIB than many hon. Members on both sides of the House who have contributed to the debates. I can mention that with equanimity, because I know that none of us would stand a chance of being appointed, but such is life. There may be life after death after the next election for at least some Opposition Members. I would not want them to be excluded from such considerations.

I, too, was concerned about the case of Mr. John Kay. I implore my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to give a full explanation. I suspect that what I am asking may be echoed by several Conservative as well as Opposition Members. The situation must be cleared up. I have spoken to the Governor of the Bank of England about it, and I am led to believe that no objections were forthcoming from the bank about that appointment. It would be wrong and a dangerous precedent if we were to be left with the impression that other Government Departments were having undue influence over decisions and appointments, the mechanisms for which are clearly laid down in the legislation that we are discussing.

I have every confidence that a Conservative Government and Conservative Ministers would in no way be influenced, in the way that has been suggested by some of the more scurrilous commentaries, by the economic or political complexion of the individual concerned, but there remains a suspicion that, perhaps because of some of his economic policies and attitudes, on balance Mr. Kay was considered, not by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, not by the Governor of the Bank of England, not by the chairman of the SIB, but by another Minister or another Department, to be unacceptable.

That must be cleared up. While it may be the way of the world that there is informal consultation at inter-ministerial level before many appointments in public life are made, we are laying down legislation which we want to be properly observed once it is enacted. I hope that we shall have opportunities to speak again in the debate, with the leave of the House, if the matter is not satisfactorily cleared up.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): The amendment and the amendment to it moved by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) give us a useful opportunity to debate the important matter of the composition — the membership — of the designated agency, a subject that deserves some reflective consideration by the House. I welcome the fact that several hon. Members wish to speak in this important debate.

The matter of lay representation on the designated agency is inextricably bound up with the accountability of that agency. It is a real problem as to how the designated agency, the SIB, is to be kept under some ultimate control. After all, it will be a big beast in the jungle and, as is the way with big beasts, it will develop its own habits and momentum. Its staff will develop their own culture and they will go their own way. In many ways, that is what they should do because we are implementing a strategy of self-regulation. None the less, it is also the principle of the Bill that the apparatus of supervision of the investment industry should be kept accountable to the Secretary of State, the House and the public. How is that to be achieved? The designated agency is to be accountable to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am trying to be as tolerant as I can in approaching the debate, but the hon. Gentleman is going too far beyond the terms of the amendment in discussing accountability. We are talking about the composition of the body.

Mr. Howarth: I will certainly heed your warning, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The appointment of members is a responsibility of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Will the Secretary of State have working within his Department a large bureaucracy, strong enough manned and equipped then to mark the SIB in its various functions? Is that the way in which the public interest will be guarded? It is unlikely that we will have a bureaucracy on that scale. It would be expensive, ineffective and involve duplication. At the same time, we have to be on our guard against the tendency of self-regulatory organisations, and indeed of professions, to look too carefully to their own interests and too little to the interests of the public. There is a danger in the system that has been established that the SIB, like the SROs, having been given this very important and dangerous power to exclude membership, may use that power to restrain competition. They would be using their devolved powers to restrict entry, to discipline members and to expel members of the investment community. We must watch that and this is where the question of lay representation arises.

11 am

It is a classic observation in economics that businesses which are to be regulated before long embrace their regulators, and we arrive at a state of affairs in which the regulators serve the interests of the businesses they are appointed to regulate. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) will not disagree with me that that is prevalent in other areas such as agriculture, air and road transport. If the House will allow me to put it in this way, for lack of an equivalent Anglo-Saxon expression, we must be on our guard against "déformation professionelle". I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East for using European jargon. By that expression I mean the tendency for members of a profession to equate the interests of everyone else with their own interest.

We see examples of this among the most respectable and self-respecting professional people. We have seen how the Law Society defended as a manifestation of a supreme and timeless wisdom the solicitors' monopoly of conveyancing — and that happened before my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) became a Member of the House. We have also seen the doctors, vigorously encouraged by the British Medical Association, feeling justified in telling their ailing patients that the National Health Service would be dismantled if we as mere politicians suggested that doctors should not have an unlimited right to prescribe any drugs they saw fit at whatever cost to the taxpayer. We are also witnessing a similar example in the sad case of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, which is arguing that it is in the interests of education that it should pursue a pay claim by dint of disrupting children's schooling.

It would be prudent to suppose that this tendency on the part of professional people to assure that what suits them is in the general interest may manifest itself in the City. That is why the amendment proposed by the hon.

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Member for Stockton, South is important. There should be adequate lay representation on the designated agency. If we examine the present membership of the agency, we see that it consists of 18 people including the chairman, Sir Kenneth Berrill. Of the 18, 14 are either members of professional investing institutions or members of bodies, firms or partnerships which make their money by advising professional investing institutions. There are three industrialists. They are an important element of what one might term lay representation except I am not sure that the general public would consider that industrialists are so far removed from being professional financiers that they could quite be regarded as lay.

The three industrialists who are members of the SIB are eminent and distinguished people. They are also very senior and busy people, as chairmen and chief executives of companies. It is doubtful whether in practice they will be able to give the personal time and attention which is needed to carry out their function as members of the SIB.

Mrs. Rachel Waterhouse is chairman of the Consumers Association and a member of the SIB. I have not met Mrs. Waterhouse and all that I have heard about her is good. She is an assiduous servant of the consumer interest. But she is very busy in many areas. As the sole Boadicea representing consumers on the SIB, and with so many other duties, there is some doubt as to whether even Mrs. Rachel Waterhouse, singlehanded, can perform the functions required.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) suggested in any event that we have to be a little sceptical about the capacity of professional representatives of the consumer adequately to represent consumer interests. To draw a parallel, as raised in an earlier debate, there is a feeling that the CBI is not the perfect representative of the business man. That is inevitable. Much as I admire the reported work of Mrs. Waterhouse, I find it difficult to believe that she can find time to consume anything but official lunches and papers, considering how much time she spends representing consumer interests.

We must find more genuine "village-Hampdens" and "village Waterhouses". But they will not be so easy to find. I wonder how my hon. and learned Friend the Minister envisages that they will be found. We cannot just take a random sample of applicants for TSB or British Gas shares. We would probably find if we did that they were German or Japanese who, as consumers, perhaps should be represented on the SIB. However, that is perhaps moving too far from the amendment.

The lay representation on the SIB must be strong. I am, however, also concerned that the SIB is too large and that it consists of 18 members. They could too easily be divided and conquered by powerful chairmen. I do not mean to imply in any that Sir Kenneth Berrill, for whom I have genuine admiration, will be other than dedicated to his proper functions as regulator and supervisor. But the SIB is a large body, consisting of many people who will not be full-time members. We must suppose that Sir Kenneth and Mr. Croft will run the show.

It is desirable that there should be genuinely effective and prominent members on the designated agency. I fear that is insufficiently achieved in the present membership. I hope that the Minister will comment on that. It will be difficult to ensure that the SIB adequately represents the interests of consumers which, as a body, it should. It is rather a large body, consisting almost entirely of part-time members. I would rather see a smaller body with more full-time members and more lay members. Like the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), I believe that it is probably a mistake for the alliance parties to be dogmatic as to numbers. I have reservations about the amendment. But I would welcome my hon. and learned Friend's comments on the important issue of principle raised in the debate.

Mr. Cash (Stafford): This is a very important provision. We ought to be extremely glad that the Government have brought forward, in the House of Lords, a provision that goes a considerable way towards ensuring that there is a proper balance between public interests on the one hand and the interests of the SIB on the other.

Lord Reid made it quite clear in the Pharmaceutical Society case that when making a judgment about how people should carry out their functions in a self-regulatory organisation—which in that case was a chartered body —the interests of the public must always prevail over the interests of remuneration — by which, in general terms, he meant self-interest. That is the heart of the matter and, in regard to the conduct of what will be carried out under the Bill, it is the heart of the Bill also.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister knows, I have on many occasions tabled amendments and raised questions about the importance of having independent, objective and competent assessments about the activities of the SROs. Indeed, I repeated those points yesterday. Those same questions arise regarding the SIB because it is at the apex of the financial services sector. We are now in the big bang, and I shall judge by whether it becomes a galaxy or a black hole. If the people involved do not carry out their functions properly—and it depends on who they are as to whether they will—the City is in for rather a disappointing time.

I am confident that we shall make the right appointments, and that the appointees will be people of quality, strong-minded, and independent as and when that is required. If they are not, we shall have wasted our time on this Bill. At the end of the day, the SIB will be regulating the SROs, and if they do not function effectively there will be no effective supervision over the City.

Yesterday I mentioned the number of foreign organisations coming into the City, and we must expect that. However, it is incumbent upon us to draw attention to the importance of ensuring that the people on the SROs and the SIB can all be relied upon to act with the independence and quality necessary to ensure that the financial services sector functions effectively.

In many ways it is rather like seeking to have non-executive members on a board—something that is well known in the City—so that we can be sure that when matters crop up that are of direct interest to the people involved in the organisation in question there are people of independent mind who will say, "Wait a minute, should we be doing this or that, or should we not take a second opinion?"

The question of quorum is also important, but there has been no reference to that yet in the debate. Irrespective of the number of people proposed as a minimum by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), one third of members being independent practitioners could prove to be unwieldy.

When I tabled an amendment on the same point in Committee, I had a difference of opinion with other hon. Members. It is essential to have effective independence. The most important thing is to have people of strong character, considerable integrity and high calibre who will be determined to ensure that the system functions and that there will not be a cosy club within a cosy club. The system must be effective so that the big bang works in the interests of this country and ensures that the City stays in the forefront of the affairs of the nation.

11.15 am

Mr. Tim Smith: I suspect that the next occasion on which we shall have the opportunity to consider these matters will be early next year, when we shall have to consider the designation order for the SIB. One matter that we shall consider then will be the composition of the board.

I believe that the present composition fails to meet existing criteria in the Bill. There is no provision in the schedule for deputy chairmen, yet the board has two. They are both persons with experience of investment business rather than regular users of investment services. If there are to be two deputy chairmen, one should represent users of investment services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) mentioned that, of the 18 board members, only four fit into category 3B while 14 fit into category 3A. Of the four, three are industrialists—undoubtedly users on their own account of the services provided by the City — and just one represents the interests of private investors. That is unsatisfactory and there should be at least three persons representing private investors.

If the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) had his way, there would be considerably more than that——

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Six.

Mr. Smith: Yes, three of each, so two further consumer members should be appointed. Mrs. Waterhouse has a difficult job because she is the sole representative of consumer interests. However, it was to protect the interests of the private investor that the Bill was first brought before the House.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that the designation order will be subject to an affirmative resolution, so there will be a considerable incentive to ensure that the persons included on the list will be representative of the matters that we have discussed today? The order will have to be approved by both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Smith: That is precisely what I said at the beginning of my speech. I said that the next occasion on which we will have the opportunity to consider these matters will be when we discuss the designation order, which is subject to affirmative resolution. We shall then also consider the composition of the board and whether the Government's proposals comply with the schedule.

I am concerned that, because of the preponderance of members being persons with experience of investment business and with a particular experience of a particular part of the City, inevitably it will be difficult for them to be objective. I am not being critical, but they will have a certain bias because they may have made their names by promoting a product that they believe is more in the interests of investors than other products. We must be conscious of that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and I have been pressing the board to do more to help the investors with a disclosure of charges and the provision of a level playing field. There are different interests between, first, the pure unit trust, secondly, the unit linked policy and, thirdly, the straightforward life assurance policy with major profits.

It is important to have more lay members on the board. I hope that when the final proposals are brought before the House early next year they will include an improved constitution for the board.

Mr. Howard: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish first to deal with the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), which I invite the House to reject, largely for the reasons given by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and by my hon. Friends. I do not think that the rigid formula which is the basis of the amendment would make it easier to arrive at the proper balance that the main amendment before the House would require.

We have had an interesting and important debate. There is unanimity about the significance of the subject and about the importance of achieving a proper balance of membership on the SIB. There might be some differences about the route to be followed, but we are united about the importance of the end.

The hon. Member for Dagenham asked about the criteria which have been and will continue to be used to make appointments to the board and about the circumstances. The first requirement is that appointees should be people of the highest calibre and integrity who can make a valuable personal contribution to the board's work. That requirement militates against the appointment of unknown people as my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) suggested, or even the "village-Hampdens" who were espoused by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth).

People of the highest calibre and integrity are also fairly busy people, but that does not mean that, if they accept an appointment such as this, they do not discharge the attached obligations with proper effectiveness and thoroughness. I am sure that all members of the board fulfil that requirement and devote the necessary attention to the task.

I should like to make it clear that nobody is appointed in a representative capacity but, if the board is to be effective, it must include people with knowledge and experience relevant to its work. When making appointments, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Governor of the Bank of England must have regard to the desirability of including people with knowledge of the different investment businesses being regulated, users of financial services and people with a consumer background. They must avoid having too large and unwieldy a board. That would not be desirable or help the board to achieve its purpose. All of those factors must be balanced.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon said that the structure which the Bill would put in place should not work in a way detrimental to competition. He will bear in mind the fact that the composition of the board and of SROs does not by any means constitute the only

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safeguard against any anti-competitive flavour. He will appreciate the role of the Director General of Fair Trading which the Bill provides.

I am sure that, on reflection, my hon. Friend will accept that the users of financial services—the three members of the board to whom he referred with some qualification—would be in an especially advantageous position, as substantial users of financial services, to ensure that the system was not operated in a way which was in any sense detrimental to competition.

Reference has been made to the presence on the SIB of Mrs. Waterhouse and the three industrialist users, as though they were the only non-practitioner members. That overlooks the presence of the chief executive, Mr. Croft, who is not from a practitioner background, and the fact that the chairman is no longer a practitioner. I suggest that that combination provides an effective independent element on the board.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester returned to the charge that he has often made before based on his unhappiness about the role of the Governor of the Bank of England in the appointment of members of the board. It is important, as I have no doubt said before—we discussed this matter at some length in Committee—that the agency commands the respect of those it regulates. The Governor's presence does, and will continue to, reassure the business community that the people who are appointed will understand the proper concerns of that community. That will create the right atmosphere for compliance with the rules as a matter of course. It is important that the role of the Governor should be preserved—it provides an important safeguard.

I shall not be drawn into any comment on some of the press speculation about the appointment of any individual to the board. It would be most undesirable were I to do so, for reasons which I think will be obvious to hon. Members. It would create a most undesirable precedent and I shall refrain from any comment on that matter.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: With the leave of the House, I should like to comment on what has been said.

This has been a most useful debate and I hope that it has made it quite clear to the Minister and those involved in the appointment of members of the SIB that the House wants a strong—possibly an overwhelming—consumer and user interest on that board.

Not for the first time, the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) spoke strongly and clearly on this matter. I entirely agree with him that the purpose of the Bill must not be lost sight of. Its purpose is to protect the investor and to ensure the interests of the consumer. At times, as a result of ministerial statements and statements by others, one has wondered whether the interests of the City or the interests of consumers were being protected. I hope that, as a result of appointments to the board, the Government's predominant interest will be crystal clear.

Ours is not a rigid amendment. It does not specify a number that should be achieved. Rather it specifies a minimum, and a modest minimum at that—six board members representing consumer interests out of a total of 18. In view of assurances that have been given about consumer interests being represented on the board, I do not believe that we are demanding too much.

To judge from what the Minister has said today and previously, there seems to be some concern about finding people to perform the required role on the board. I hope that a good proportion of women will be appointed to represent consumer and other interests. There are many outstanding women who could perform the role of lay representatives extremely effectively. The Citizens Advice Bureaux movement, the Consumers Association—we have one from there already—and journalism spring to mind, but there are many other areas in which excellent people with time could be found to ensure that the consumer interest is satisfactorily represented. Time is important, and we have discussed it previously. Although the most effective people often have heavy commitments, it is vital to have people who can devote time to watching what is going on and taking a close interest in matters that come before the board so that they can make a full rather than a passing contribution to the SIB's work.

The hon. Member for Chichester also mentioned the involvement of the Governor of the Bank of England. He knows that I have considerable sympathy with his general view. I took the view that the bank should have lost its role in banking supervision. I should have liked a separate body to have been responsible for banking supervision, as is the case in the United States and several other countries. The central bank should act as a central bank, and not take on the rather curious role of nanny and spokesman for the City as well. Although the Bill now provides for Government involvement in the appointments, I hope that the Minister and his colleagues have noted the strong feeling of hon. Members on the importance of the responsibilities that the Secretary of State carries out on our behalf. We would not want to see the Bank of England and the Governor blackballing people whom the Government would properly want to see.

This has been a useful debate and I hope that the Minister has received the message loud and clear that we want good, strong, independent and lay representation on the SIB when it is finally established. In due course, as has been said, we shall have the designating order debate and during it we shall raise hell if we do not have the sort of representation that we have been seeking this morning and in previous debates during the Bill's passage. It is with that promise that I am happy to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 438 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 439, in page 160, line 2, at end insert—

"(2) The arrangements must make provision for the investigation of complaints in respect of authorised persons to be carried out in appropriate cases independently of the agency and those persons.".

11.30 am

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment implements the assurance given on Report in another place that the Government would bring forward an amendment requiring a designated agency to have arrangements for the independent investigation of complaints against authorised persons. The amendment requires such independent investigation only "in appropriate cases". As I think Lord Morton recognised when moving a similar amendment concerning SROs on Report in another place, it would not be desirable to

require all complaints to be the subject of independent investigation. It may be quicker and easier to resolve some complaints in other ways, but it is right that an investor should normally have recourse to an independent person if his complaint has reached the designated agency—the top supervisory body in the system—and has still not been satisfactorily resolved. I am glad to say that the SIB is in any case planning to set up an ombudsman system. I welcome this move. The amendment will make some such arrangement a requirement if powers are to be transferred to a designated agency. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Gould: The use of mandatory language in the amendment is clearly the consequence of pressure put upon the Government in another place. For that reason, it may be appropriate at this stage to pay tribute to their Lordships in that they, like the Standing Committee, have done what they could—it has been a substantial element—to make the Bill a better piece of legislation. The amendment is part of that overall achievement.

The fact that a mandatory requirement has been imposed on the SIB with a permissive requirement applying to the SROs means that we should ask how the Minister envisages those provisions reacting with each other. Does he foresee, as clearly we must, the SIB setting up its ombudsman procedure, in effect removing from the SROs the need to do similarly? In other words, the permissive power seems unlikely to be used, and it would be useful if the Minister would confirm that that is his view.

How does the Minister think that the ombudsman procedure being set up by the SIB will work? Is it, to use the phrase of the insurance ombudsman, whom I had the good fortune to meet yesterday, a powered ombudsman—an ombudsman with the power, conferred presumably with the agreement of the contributing parties—to award sums of money by way of compensation and to apply other remedies? Or is it to be an ombudsman who simply makes recommendations which he hopes will be acted upon?

In the light of the discussions that we have already had on matters such as McDonald Wheeler, how does the Minister see the remedy fitting into what is by now—I make no complaint of this—a proliferation of potential remedies available to aggrieved investors? It would also be welcome if the Minister would say briefly whether there is anything in the work of his Department that would offer some crumb of comfort to investors who may have lost money as a result of the collapse of McDonald Wheeler.

Mr. Nelson: Two points cause me some disquiet. The first is the general point that, while I understand the import of what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister said, I remain a little concerned that we may in some way be detracting from the prime responsibility of the SIB to undertake inquiries and investigations. We are setting up the SIB, as we are the SROs, with the clear duty to investigate cases of abuse and dereliction of duty by authorised persons.

If we are to insist, as the amendment does, that arrangements must also be made for the investigation of complaints to be carried out in certain instances by bodies other than the designated agency—the SIB in this instance, or, in the previous amendment, the SROs—are we diluting or circumventing the responsibility of the SIB to investigate?

I should be happier if the SIB had that responsibility. I do not see many instances in which there would be a conflict of interest or where the integrity and objectivity of the SIB in making investigations could be brought into question. If it could, something would have to be done about the SIB, its composition, its officials and mechanisms for investigations.

I am not clear in what instances an independent, separate body from the SIB, over which we have no legislative control and which is not established by law, would have a preferential right to conduct an investigation, as opposed to the SIB. I am not convinced of the necessity or wisdom of diluting the investigatory arrangements that we have hitherto granted to the SIB.

Secondly, hon. Members will be aware that in Committee we made some important changes, not only to the status of the SIB, but to its investigative powers and its powers to prosecute offenders. One of the important changes that we made was to ensure that the SIB was able to investigate unauthorised as well as authorised persons. The reason for that is that there is no point in being able to investigate just the good guys, and not the bad guys.

It must be possible to respond to a complaint from a member of the public or a practitioner that somebody is ostensibly carrying on an unauthorised investment business which, remember, under the Bill, is a criminal offence. Before those amendments, the SIB, which, ostensibly, is the overall regulatory body, was not able to undertake an investigation of an unauthorised—criminal—concern which was holding itself out as an investment business and possibly defrauding substantial numbers of the public. The SIB is now able to investigate allegations that a business or individual is carrying on an unauthorised investment concern.

I mention that because schedule 5, paragraph 4, to which the amendment applies, says:

"The agency must have effective arrangements for the investigation of complaints arising out of the conduct of investment business by authorised persons"—

it does not say "and unauthorised persons"—

"or against any recognised self-regulating organisation, professional body, investment exchange or clearing house."

The amendment says:

"The arrangements must make provision for the investigation of complaints in respect of authorised persons to be carried out in appropriate cases independent of the agency and those persons."

So the schedule and the amendment insist that the SIB should have effective mechanisms for investigating authorised concerns.

As we have given—rightly—the SIB the power to investigate authorised concerns, surely it should have as effective mechanisms for investigating unauthorised concerns. If it is proper, as the amendment implies, that that can also be done independently of SIB, such an independent body should also have effective measures and means of investigating unauthorised and criminal concerns.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) welcomed the mandatory nature of the amendment, which contrasts with the permissive nature of an earlier matter. However, it seems to me that this is not entirely mandatory, because the mandatory nature is purely that provision should be required to be made, and it depends on what may be an appropriate case. Who will be the judge of what is an appropriate case? Is the SIB to judge whether a case is appropriate for independent

[Mr. Butterfill]

machinery or whether it will carry out the investigation itself? Will that responsibility fall on the Secretary of State? Can the complainant decide what is an appropriate case? The matter is not entirely clear, and I would be grateful if my hon. and learned Friend the Minister would clarify it.

Mr. Cash: I wish to associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) in his extremely interesting and useful intervention, which supported many of the points made in Committee. I should like to add a gloss to them.

The arrangements under Lords amendment No. 439 provide for

"the investigation of complaints in respect of authorised persons to be carried out in appropriate cases independently of the agency."

That continues the theme which we have, rightly, come back to over and over again during the debate — the importance of an independent assessment.

Paragraph 4 of schedule 5, headed "Investigation of complaints", draws a distinction, which is that

"The agency must have effective arrangements for the investigation of complaints"

in respect of

"authorised persons or against any recognised self-regulating organisation, professional body, investment exchange or clearing house."

Whereas Lords amendment No. 439 deals with independent arrangements in respect of authorised persons, we do not have independent arrangements in respect of the SROs, professional bodies, investment exchanges or clearing houses in the same terms.

Earlier I referred to the possible problem of blackballing within what could be described as a cosy club. I hope that that will never be the case. That could create severe difficulties and an independent investigation would be required into the activities of an SRO. We touched on that matter earlier, and I had an assurance from my hon. and learned Friend, for which I was extremely grateful. That point has not been included in the Lords amendment to paragraph 4. I fall back on the assurance that my hon. and learned Friend has given to deal with this substantial point. If people are to have the confidence that they should have in the SROs, they should know that the independence will be combined with a determination not to blackball people unreasonably.

Mr. Howard: I shall endeavour to deal with the various points raised in this interesting debate. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) asked about the relationship between this provision and the fact that there is not a similar provision for SROs. The position is, indeed, as he suggested was likely to be the case, that the compulsory requirement for the agency to have an ombudsman system applicable to all authorised persons removes the need for the recognised body to be obliged to set up its own ombudsman system. It is free to do so, if it wishes, as one way of meeting the requirement to have effective arrangements for investigating complaints. The precise way in which the ombudsman scheme would work is a matter for the SIB. It would be for the board to work out the details in relation to the various points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

On the implications of this proposal for the McDonald Wheeler case, I imagine that the hon. Gentleman would, on reflection, agree that the real answer lies in the compensation arrangements rather than in this provision. It may well be that there would be matters of complaint which could be appropriately investigated by an ombudsman, but the important safeguard for the victims of the McDonald Wheeler case when the Bill's regime is in place lies in the compensation provisions.

11.45 am

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) asked about the circumstances in which it would be appropriate for complaints of this nature to be made, and he expressed the concern that in some way the SIB's status and functions would be diluted by the provisions of this independent investigation mechanism. With respect, his concern is unfounded. What is here provided is an additional mechanism within the Bill's structure. If a complaint against an authorised person has made its way up the system and has been investigated by the SIB, but not to the satisfaction of the complainant, there may well be an advantage in having the additional facility of an investigation by an independent body of the type that we are discussing. That would maximise the extent to which a complainant could be satisfied that his complaint was being thoroughly and properly investigated.

My hon. Friend's second point is that these particular provisions are restricted to complaints against authorised persons. It is right that they should be so restricted. This provision relates to the scheme at the heart of the Bill. It is appropiate that the independent mechanism should be restricted to complaints against authorised persons. That is not to say that there will not have to be effective mechanisms for the implementation of the provisions, for which my hon. Friend was to some extent responsible during the passage of the legislation and which extended the ability of the SIB to investigate unauthorised persons. That remains and is not in any way impaired by these provisions. It will be necessary for the SIB to provide an effective mechanism for investigating unauthorised persons. That is one of the matters to be taken into account by the Secretary of State at the time of designation. I do not think that it is necessary for there to be this precise form of independent investigation of complaints against unauthorised persons.

Mr. Nelson: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for what he has said. He made an important statement. He has said—it certainly does not say this in the legislation — that the SIB will have to have effective measures for investigating unauthorised persons. That is implicit in the amendment that has been passed. I suspect that the matter may have been overlooked as almost a consequential amendment to that amendment, but we should have added in the schedule the investigation of unauthorised as well as authorised persons. As the legislation stands, there is a duty on the SIB to have a mechanism only for investigating authorised persons. I hope that what my hon. and learned Friend has said will be taken note of by SIB.

Mr. Howard: I am not sure that my hon. Friend is correct in that. Clause 92 provides for effective mechanisms to be provided for the investigation of unauthorised persons. That is not dealt with in schedule 5. It is concerned with establishing an independent mechanism for the investigation of authorised persons.

That does not detract from the other provisions. I think that clause 92 will provide my hon. Friend with the answer to his point.

My note of the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) is wholly defective, and its significance has escaped my recollection. However, I should be happy to give way to him.

Mr. Butterfill: I am glad to clarify the point. I asked who would be the arbiter.

Mr. Howard: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend. The answer is, of course, the SIB. It would be for it to decide what are the appropriate circumstances in which the independent mechanism is to operate, but the Secretary of State will look at the totality of the rules made by the SIB and at the provision made for that independent mechanism when it comes to the designation process.

Mr. Butterfill: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that explanation, but is it not a little extraordinary that there should be a mandatory obligation to set up this mechanism, although it then becomes entirely discretionary as to whether it is implemented?

Mr. Howard: That is not an entirely fair construction to make. When the matter was debated in the other place, it was accepted that it would not be desirable to require all complaints to be the subject of such independent investigation. There will be circumstances in which other, equally effective, arrangements can be made. I see no difficulty about leaving it to the SIB, subject to the requirement to satisfy the Secretary of State at the designation stage, to identify those circumstances in which independent investigation is likely to be particularly appropriate and desirable. I hope that I have answered my hon. Friend's point.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 440 to 550 agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Schedule 13

Transitional Provisions

Lords amendment: No. 551, in page 208, line 36, at end insert—

"7A.—(1) Subsection (7) of section 80 of this Act shall not apply to a scheme which is in existence on the date on which this Act is passed if—

(a) the units under the scheme are included in the Official List of The Stock Exchange and have been so included throughout the period of five years ending on the date on which this paragraph comes into force;

(b) the law of the country or territory in which the scheme is established precludes the participants being entitled or the operator being required as mentioned in that subsection; and

(c) throughout the period of five years ending on the date on which the application is made under that section, units under the scheme have in fact been regularly redeemed as mentioned in that subsection or the operator has in fact regularly ensured that participants were able to sell their units as there mentioned.

(2) The grounds for revoking an order made under section 80 of this Act by virtue of this paragraph shall include the ground that it appears to the Secretary of State that since the making of the order units under the scheme have ceased to be regularly redeemed or the operator has ceased regularly to ensure their sale as mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)*(c)* above.".

Read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 552.

Mr. Tim Smith: I seek some clarification of amendment No. 552, which relates to delegation orders, and is part of the transitional provisions. As we are now dealing with the schedule on transitional provisions, can my hon. and learned Friend say when he thinks that the provisions will come into force, and give the timetable for implementing the Bill?

Mr. Howard: I am happy to respond to the second of my hon. Friend's points. When I have dealt with it, I may well be in a position to deal with his first point. However, the answer to the second point is that the hope and expectation is that the putative designated agency, the SIB, will be in a position to make its application for designation within a relatively short time, and that that application will be duly considered by the Secretary of State. It is hoped that he will be in a position to designate the agency in the early part of next year.

The agency will then have the task of considering applications for recognition by the SROs, which will have been drawing up their rules to provide equivalence with the investor protection given by the rules of the agency. It is a little difficult to judge the precise moment when recognition will be granted, but I very much hope that the final stages of putting the structure contemplated by this legislation into place will be completed in the latter part of next year, so that businesses will be applying for authorisation and will obtain it in that time scale.

Amendment No. 552 enables functions to be transferred before they come into force, so that, for example, it would be possible for the SIB to be made responsible for granting direct authorisations before the requirement to be authorised came into force, thus anticipating that last stage in the structure.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 552 and 553 agreed to.

Schedule 14

Consequential Amendments

Lords amendment: No. 554, in page 209, line 20, at end insert—

A1. In section 22 of the Charities Act 1960—

(a) subsection (10) shall be omitted; and

(b) in subsection (11) for the words "subsections (9) and (10)" there shall be substituted the words "Subsection (9)".

A2. In the Trustee Investments Act 1961—

(a) in section 11(3) for the words "the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 or the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act (Northern Ireland) 1940" there shall be substituted the words "the Financial Services Act 1986";

(b) for paragraph 3 of Part III of Schedule 1 there shall be substituted—

"3. In any units of an authorised unit trust scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986";

(c) in paragraph 2*(a)* of Part IV of Schedule 1 for the words from "a recognised stock exchange" onwards there shall be substituted the words "a recognised investment exchange within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986";

(d) in the definition of "securities" in paragraph 4 of Part IV of that Schedule after the word "debentures" there shall be inserted the words "units within paragraph 3 of Part III of this Schedule".

A3. In section 32 of the Clergy Pensions Measure 1961 No. 3—

[Mr. Howard]

(a) for paragraph *(t)* of subsection (1) there shall be substituted—

"*(t)* in any units in any authorised unit trust scheme or a recognised scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986"; and

(b) in subsection (5)*(a)* for the words from "a recognised stock exchange" onwards there shall be substituted the words "a recognised investment exchange within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986.".

A4. In the Stock Transfer Act 1963—

(a) for paragraph *(e)* of section 1(4) there shall be substituted—

"*(e)* units of an authorised unit trust scheme or a recognised scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986"; and

(b) in the definition of "securities" in section 4(1) for the words from "unit trust scheme" to "scheme" there shall be substituted the words "collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986".

A5. In the Stock Transfer Act (Northern Ireland) 1963—

(a) for paragraph *(e)* of section 1(4) there shall be substituted—

"*(e)* units of an authorised unit trust scheme or a recognised scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986"; and

(b) in the definition of "securities" in section 4(1) for the words from "unit trust scheme" to "scheme" there shall be substituted the words "collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986".

A6. In section 25 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 1964—

(a) subsection (16) shall be omitted; and

(b) in subsection (17) for the words "Subsection (15) and (16)" there shall be substituted the words "Subsection (15)".

A7. In the Local Authorities' Mutual Investment Trust Act 1968—

(a) in section 1(2) for the words "recognised stock exchange within the meaning of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958" there shall be substituted the words "recognised investment exchange within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 1986"; and

(b) in the definition of "unit trust scheme" in section 2 for the words "Financial Services Act 1986".

A8. In the Local Government Act 1972—

(a) in section 98(1) for the words from "and" onwards there shall be substituted the words "means—

(a) investments falling within any of paragraphs 1 to 6 of Schedule 1 to the Financial Services Act 1986 or, so far as relevant to any of those paragraphs, paragraph 11 of that Schedule; or

(b) rights (whether actual or contingent) in respect of money lent to, or deposited with, any society registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 or any building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986. "; and

(b) for the definition of "securities" in section 146(2) there shall be substituted—

"" securities" has the meaning given in section 98(1) above".

A9. For subsection (1) of section 42 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 there shall be substituted—

"(1) In sections 39 and 41 of this Act "securities" means—

(a) investments falling within any of paragraphs 1 to 6 of Schedule 1 to the Financial Services Act 1986 or, so far as relevant to any of those paragraphs, paragraph 11 of that Schedule; or

(b) rights (whether actual or contingent) in respect of money lent to, or deposited with, any society registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 or any building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986."

A10. For paragraph 20 of Schedule 1 to the Industry Act 1975 there shall be substituted—

"20. Section 52 of the Financial Services Act 1986 (restrictions on advertising) shall not apply to any investment advertisement within the meaning of that section which the Board issue or cause to be issued in the discharge of their functions."

A11. For paragraph 20 of Schedule 1 to the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975 there shall be substituted—

"20. Section 52 of the Financial Services Act 1986 (restrictions on advertising) shall not apply to any investment advertisement within the meaning of that section which the Agency issue or cause to be issued in the discharge of their functions."

A12. For paragraph 21 of Schedule 1 to the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 there shall be substituted—

"21. Section 52 of the Financial Services Act 1986 (restrictions on advertising) shall not apply to any investment advertisement within the meaning of that section which the Agency issue or cause to be issued in the discharge of their functions."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 555 to 581.

Mr. Howard: I would have moved the amendment formally, but I seek your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I wish to associate myself with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) in paying tribute to the part played in this legislative process by those in the other place and by Committee Members, many of whom are in the House today. I am particularly grateful to officials in the Department, who have borne the brunt of this heavy burden of legislation, and who have discharged their responsibilities in a way that goes far beyond the course of duty. I am enormously grateful to them for the assistance that they have given me throughout.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 555 to 581 agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 4th November, the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Moore relating to the Channel Tunnel Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, for three hours after is has been entered upon, and if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at the end of that period, Mr. Speaker shall put the Question on any Amendment which may have been moved, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any other Amendments selected by him which may then be moved, and on the Main Question, or the Main Question, as amended.

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 5th November, the Motion in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Agriculture (S.I., 1986, No. 1233) may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after is has been entered upon, and if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at the end of that period Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Cancer Patients (Radiotherapy)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

11.57 am

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Although I am happy that the Adjournment debate should have started so unexpectedly early, I am sorry that it means that I shall not be joined, as I had expected to be, by my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess), and for Rochford (Dr. Clark) as well as by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). However, I hope that it means that my hon. Friend the Minister will have a little more time for her other important duties. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford was flying over from Germany especially for the debate, having thought that it would start later in the day. Obviously, I cannot speak for senior Ministers or attribute views to them, but I think that my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), who is a distinguished member of the Government, has associated himself with this cause by attending a public rally in Southend, where he made a most distinguished and important speech of support. In short, I hope to speak today not just for myself, but for those who represent the area of Southend.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that one of my few claims to fame is that I have been in the House for a long time—more than 20 years, which exceeds a life sentence. I can assure her in all sincerity that during that time I have never encountered an issue that has raised so much genuine alarm, concern and fear in one area as the decision of the North East Thames regional health authority to recommend that the radiotherapy unit at Southend general hospital should be closed, with patients being referred instead to a new centre to be established at Harold Wood hospital. This is not, in any sense, an example of the normal complaint from the unsuccessful area when decisions are made on the location of a Health Service facility, but a case of a substantial and growing area where the inhabitants believe with good reason that they have been consistently discriminated against by the regional health authority and that this final decision on vital cancer treatment services has been made unfairly, unreasonably, irresponsibly and in circumstances that reflect no credit on a vital public service.

If, as seems inevitable, the community health council lodges a formal complaint after the consultation period, the decision will have to be made by the Secretary of State. I should be failing in my duty as a constituency representative if I did not make the Minister aware at this early stage of the sense of outrage in Southend at the region's recommendation and at the circumstances in which the decision was made. This is reflected not only in the greatest campaign ever by the local newspaper, the *Evening Echo*, but in every section of the Southend community.

The Minister will be aware that the region's reappraisal of its cancer treatment services follows guidance from the Department's standing medical advisory committee which recommended that regional cancer treatment services catering for a population of about a million, with about 3,000 new patient referrals per annum, most of whom require radiotherapy, should be established because of the medical advantages of the concentration of medical expertise.

The regional authority commissioned Coopers and Lybrand to prepare a report which recommended the establishing of five regional units at Broomfield near Chelmsford, the Royal Free hospital, the Middlesex hospital, St. Bartholomew's hospital and the London hospital with the consequent closure of facilities at a number of hospitals, including Essex County, Southend and Oldchurch. The proposal caused so much concern and alarm throughout the area that the region, after careful and detailed consultations with the health authorities and with hon. Members, agreed to scrap the Broomfield proposal and to propose an alternative of six centres on a basis that inevitably would mean that one unit would fall below the desired 2,000 new patients per year. For example, it was agreed that Colchester should be retained because of the excessive journeys which patients would otherwise be obliged to make. Faced with the alternative of retaining Southend or Oldchurch the region opted for Southend because a major factor in the option appraisal was access to services for Southend residents if a centre were not established there.

On 4 July the Harold Wood option was disregarded because it was felt that the region would not wish to consider providing services on a new site at a large cost. We have a splendid facility in Southend and there is nothing at Harold Wood. However, members of the regional authority considered, for reasons which have never been clear, that there should be yet another reappraisal of the respective merits of Southend and Harold Wood. A detailed report of the final option, dated September, was prepared and in my opinion was a fair and objective summary. It pointed out that if Harold Wood attracted the same 50 per cent. local referrals which Oldchurch had secured it would have no more patients than Southend and that this was guaranteed on the basis of performance.

The report said that if Harold Wood attracted more than 50 per cent. it could have consequences for the already limited viability of Colchester. It said that to build an entirely new hospital would mean putting Southend and Oldchurch on a running down basis for five years which could have a serious effect on staff morale and the services provided to the community on the two sites.

More significantly, the report argued that the Harold Wood option would require expenditure of an additional £4.5 million to duplicate services already provided satisfactorily. The final recommendation seemed clear. If I had been a member of that authority I should have been influenced by what it said. The recommendation states:

"Given the high capital cost and uncertain success of the Harold Wood option, and the shortage of capital available to fund many other much needed service improvements in the region, the authority may decide that the Southend option would provide an acceptable pattern of services for cancer patients appropriate to the 1990s and beyond."

Although that recommendation seems clear to me, the regional council disregarded it and chose the Harold Wood option.

Southend residents and the entire staff of the hospital were unable to gather from the public discussion any good reasons why the appointed members of the regional council were prepared to disregard the clear message, the recommendation and the facts put before them. Anger and grave suspicion were added to outrage because before a

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

final decision was made the Barking and Brentwood health authorty made a public offer of £2 million from future asset sales to reduce the additional costs, subject only to the unit being located in its area. The Minister has a duty to say whether she considers that such an offer or gift, which bears all the hallmarks of a bribe from public money, was a proper or acceptable action by a district health authority appointed by the Secretary of State. Capital receipts belong to the region. The region has a clear policy that £200,000 of every asset sale is provided back to the district. Yet a district health authority offered £2 million.

That offer of a gift by another health authority was bitterly resented in Southend because our district authority has been seriously underfunded by the region for years. In one recent year the shortfall was £7 million. Steps have been taken to reduce that differential by about £300,000 a year and the authority has repeatedly been advised by the region that the underfunding correction has to proceed slowly because none of the other authorities has a penny to spare. Despite that, it seems that one authority is able to pledge £2 million out of the air.

We have often reported the consequences of underfunding to Ministers and my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware from the extensive files that hon. Members such as myself and my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West and my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon, who has just rushed to get here, as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford, have pressed the Government consistently to agree that something should be done about the underfunding.

The problem can be regarded in various ways, but I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider this fact. In Southend, the nursing cover per patient is 16 per cent. lower than the average for the whole region. The region's decision would have catastrophic consequences for morale at Southend hospital and for the comprehensive service that it provides. The general public in Southend are concerned and perplexed about what they see as a further sign of the region's callous disregard for Southend's health interests.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for attending the debate, especially as it is taking place earlier than expected, and I ask her for the clearest assurance that she and her colleagues will bear the facts—they are not opinions—in mind when decision time arrives. I ask for a clear assurance that Ministers will visit Southend to meet consultants and representatives of the Southend community before a decision is made. I ask also for a clear assurance that my hon. Friend the Minister will look carefully into the circumstances of the £2 million gift offered by a health authority in the region on condition that the services were located in its area. Will the Minister consider issuing guidance on the propriety of such actions? I should also like a clear assurance that steps will be taken to prevent any regional health authority from discriminating consistently against any area within its region.

This is a vital issue. It is an issue of justice and of fairness which must be approached seriously, urgently and firmly by Ministers charged with the duty of maintaining our health services. I am grateful to the Minister for the careful attention that she has paid to my remarks and I hope that she can give me at least some of the assurances which I seek on behalf of Southend and areas near that town.

12.8 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I welcome this opportunity to speak in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). I endorse every word that he uttered in introducing the debate. The region has made an extraordinary decision. If anyone cares to examine the matter seriously, he will find that there is no evidence that could have led the region to make such a decision. There is no evidence to support the decision on health grounds, the consideration that most concerns us, and there is no evidence that could justify the decision on financial grounds.

Anyone knows that when someone is told that he has cancer and that there is no treatment for it the traumatic and emotional consequences are extremely distressing. The region's announcement amounts to a sword of Damocles hanging above us, and we want it removed. The local people of Basildon have rallied round and are raising money to build a hospice — the St. Luke's — to treat those who, unfortunately, cannot be cured of cancer. The excellent facility that we have in Southend treats those whom we hope can be saved from cancer.

I tell the House that the Members who represent south-east Essex are united on this issue. I give warning that our constituents sustain us in our view on this matter. We are determined to stop the implementation of the region's proposal. We hope very much that the Government, when they come to the stage at which they have to give their views, will support the Members of south-east Essex.

12.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on taking the opportunity to initiate this debate. I am pleased that parliamentary circumstances have allowed us to have a rather fuller discussion than might have been possible. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) for his remarks and for the effort and energy that he has expended to be in his place to represent his constituents this morning in the light of the changed circumstances of the debate. I appreciate the efforts that have been made by both my hon. Friends. They have represented the interests of their constituents both today and up to this point extremely well, and their constituents are lucky to have them. I am sure that they recognise that. The same can be said of other hon. Members to whom I shall be referring later in my remarks.

I congratulate the Southend *Evening Echo* on the considerable and detailed interest which it has shown in the proposed changes in Southend. It has given a considered, careful and highly intelligent lead to local people. I have read with great interest the cuttings from the recent editions of the newspaper.

There is no doubt that the issue which my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East has raised has aroused considerable local interest. Ministers have received personal letters from all the local Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), and my two hon. Friends who are

in their places, my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East and for Basildon. We have received also over 100 letters from the general public. The Southend *Evening Echo*, which is running a campaign to save the unit, has held public meetings, issued publicity material and launched a petition to which over 40,000 signatures have been appended so far.

I hope that my hon. Friends will acknowledge the efforts of the regional health authority to keep all local Members informed. I am told that they have received copies of all the relevant documents. I am told also that two meetings have been held with local Members to brief them. I note the assent of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East as I say these things. I understand that he told the chairman of the authority recently that he was better briefed on this issue than on almost any other recent issue. Again I note his assent.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I have no complaint about the way in which we have been kept informed. I think my hon. Friend will be aware that two meetings have taken place, which were extremely helpful. They took place, however, before the Harold Wood proposal was suddenly resurrected after having been rejected.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that the region will note my hon. Friend's comment and will take it forward. We have the interesting circumstance that a member of my hon. Friend's family is a member of the district health authority.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My wife.

Mrs. Currie: I suspect, therefore, that we can have a better informed discussion on this topic and on this part of the Health Service in this part of the country than perhaps would be possible in many other circumstances.

I must put on the record an apology to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, who was concerned about the delay in ministerial replies to his parliamentary questions. I quote from the Southend *Evening Echo* of 22 October, which reports that my hon. Friend was

"angry and disappointed by the Minister's attitude."

That was because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had been given more than a week to answer questions on the proposed closure of the cancer unit and had not answered in that time. That was my fault. I was not happy with the bland answers that were being offered and I took them back. I take full responsibility for that. I hope that my hon. Friend is satisfied with that explanation. I must apologise to him also for the delay in replying to his letter of 22 September. I have the reply in my hand and he is welcome to it, unless he would like me to take it back to the Department for another few days for redrafting in the light of today's discussion. When we received my hon. Friend's letter there was a backlog of about 1,200 letters at the Department. That is now being cleared very quickly, but some letters, such as that from my hon. Friend, to which I attach great importance, were not being dealt with as quickly as they might have been.

As a Minister, I have to reserve my Department's position subject to consultation on this issue. If the timetable, as I understand it from the region, is followed, decisions will come to Ministers next summer. It is important that I set out that all I can do is to take note of what is being said. I cannot comment or give any opinions. Some aspects of the important details that my hon. Friends have raised will have to lie on the table. All that I can say about some of the matters to which they have drawn attention is that I shall ensure that the regional health authority's attention is drawn to them and that they are taken into consideration.

I shall set out the timetable as I understand it. A consultative document is to go to the North East Thames regional health authority in December. Any proposal for change will go to the local district health authority at Southend in January. If it goes through the January meeting, it will be the subject of the statutory three months' consultation. It will then be sent back to the regional health authority and be sent onwards to Ministers in about April or May. That is assuming that the consultation process is completed as speedily as it might be. If there is any delay, that process will take longer to complete.

I realise that it might be disappointing to my hon. Friends if I am unable to give an opinion or to come down one way or the other for or against, or even to be neutral, but I have set out the legal position, and it would be a shame if the development of cancer services in Southend and elsewhere were jeopardised by a contradiction of that position.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East for his invitation to visit Southend. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are doing our best to visit as many of the health authorities and districts as possible. My hon. Friend will be aware that there are over 190 of them. I shall take into account his invitation to visit Southend and I hope that we shall be able to accede to it before too long. I certainly look forward to visiting Southend.

My hon. Friend talked about the proposal from the Barking and Brentwood health authority, and he used the word "bribe". I am sure he realises that it is not necessary to impugn the motives of anyone concerned. The Barking and Brentwood health authority, in the same way as the Southend health authority and the North East Thames regional health authority, is looking for better health for all residents, as well as better health care. We try to run a National Health Service and I am sure that it is in the light of the considerations to which I have referred that the Barking and Brentwood health authority made its offer.

As my hon. Friend rightly said, the capital involved does not belong to the Barking and Brentwood health authority. It belongs to the regional health authority, and that has been the position for as long as I can remember. The North East Thames regional health authority has a policy of pushing decision-making down the administrative structure as far as possible to districts and, if possible, beyond that. That is commendable. A substantial proportion of capital receipts should be allocated to the districts from which the receipts are obtained, so that the districts will have some incentive to realise the receipts.

The region could rescind its decision at any time, however, either in general or in particular. The money belongs to the region, and it is not for the Barking and Brentwood health authority to regard it as its money or to be possessive about it. If the region wanted to take capital money from one district to spend it in another, the region, like any other region, would have an absolute right so to do. It may well take that into account in the plans that it has for cancer therapy.

I am informed that the regional health authority chairman told the region, when the matters were discussed in September, that no consideration was to be given to the proposed allocation of funds from Barking and

[Mrs. Currie]

Brentwood, and that the decision was not to be influenced by an offer made in respect of a district away from Southend. I have had that assurance from the regional health authority chairman in person this week and I am prepared to accept it, as I hope my hon. Friend will.

My hon. Friend asked why there was so little money to spare for Southend and for RAWP, when suddenly £2 million appeared out of the blue. I am sure he is aware that money has been short in the regional health authority for some time—I shall explain that in a moment—because of the way in which the RAWP formula works. The Barking and Brentwood proposal concerns new money which is to be achieved through receipts from capital sales. In other words, it is in the form of a cheque in the post. The money has not been realised or received. Whatever may have happened to this date is quite unconnected with what may happen from this point onwards if that district health authority or any other is able to achieve an increase in its resources through capital sales. I am sure all hon. Members hope that that will happen.

I think that my hon. Friend may have confused the capital element and the revenue element. The Barking and Brentwood health authority offered capital money. My hon. Friend's concern was the revenue allocation over recent years to Southend. We recognise that concern. As my hon. Friend knows, the RAWP formula is under review and we are taking advice as to whether it is functioning in the way we hoped. I venture a guess that, when it was set up 10 years ago, it all looked a lot easier than it turned out to be. What we have tried to do over the 10-year period is to improve the resource allocation to those parts of the country, mainly outside London, which have been seriously under-funded over a long period. That has meant holding back resources to the four main regional health authorities which cover London, one of which is the North East Thames regional health authority.

This year most of the regional health authorities are close to target. However, it remains the case that the four London regional health authorities are above the RAWP target. The remainder continue to be those authorities outside London. My right hon. Friend recognises the particular problems of London, and this year has allocated additional moneys to the four London regions, which, in the case of two, has taken them further away from the RAWP target. That has become a matter of concern to other regions.

We must consider the RAWP targets with great care and ensure that they continue to reflect not only population movements but different patterns of need, so that we can be sure that people in Trent receive a service comparable with those in Southend and that, if possible, people in the south-west are happy they are receiving the same level of service as people in central London. That cannot be done overnight. It is in the light of those discussions that the funding of Southend and the efforts of the regional health authority to improve that funding can be regarded.

The region tells me that it recognises the under-funding of Southend. As my hon. Friend said, it has attempted to put that right by an additional allocation to Southend of several hundred thousand pounds over and above the direct proportion that it might have had, and intends to continue to do so. I hope that the way in which the matter is recognised will be acceptable.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): I am interested in the comments and promises that the hon. Lady has made about cancer therapy. Will she confer with her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and impress on him the necessity for Britain to maintain an extremely close connection—in fact, to increase the connection—with CERN, the Geneva-based research centre? There could be a connection between what it is doing in particle physics and its understanding of the causation of cancer. I am sure that it would be a profitable and fruitful field if the hon. Lady directed her considerable abilities towards insisting that the British input into CERN remains as it is or is increased.

Mrs. Currie: I am not sure that I have reached cancer therapy services in Southend. I am aware that I have made no promises of any kind. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point seriously about CERN and particle physics. My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), who is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, has taken a close interest in CERN. This year, he has visited most of those departments in Europe which are concerned with it. I am well aware that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department take the matter seriously. There is no doubt that improvements in atomic physics and nuclear physics have been one of the main areas of help to cancer patients.

I deplore the way in which the word "nuclear" is increasingly used as a term of pejorative abuse. It is a matter of fact that nuclear physics have helped and have given life to many thousands of people in this country. Not long ago the *Derby Evening Telegraph* decided to have a scare about radioactive material in Derby and demanded that lists be published of the 70 sources of nuclear radiation in the Derby area. The vast majority of them turned out to be in hospitals treating cancer patients. The issue was then resolved. I take seriously the point that the hon. Gentleman has made and I shall draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Radiotherapy is provided at nine hospitals in the North East Thames regional health authority. They include the London hospital, the Middlesex, the North Middlesex, the Royal Free hospital, St. Bartholomew's, and University College in London. The hospitals outside London include the Essex County, Oldchurch, and Southend. Official advice to the Department, which we have accepted, considers that a modern radiotherapy centre should serve a population of about 1 million. North-East Thames has nine centres, for a catchment population of 4·4 million, including about 700,000 patients from North West Thames. One does not, therefore, have to be a mathematical genius to work out that, in the light of departmental advice, North East Thames has too many centres and they are too scattered.

The overall strategy of the regional health authority, as I understand it, is to concentrate radiotherapy in a smaller number of modern centres. The overall strategy was discussed at the May meeting of the regional health authority, and I believe that it was accepted with some enthusiasm. The next question was, which of the various parts of the region should have the new major centres?

I understand that there was some lobbying, including by hon. Members here, for the new regional centres to be in one or two places, including Southend. I may be wrong about that. The broad strategy of the region should be set

against the background of departmental and medical advice of the highest level and against the background of its general acceptance. That was the overall philosophy, and that is what the authority wanted to do.

I propose to leave aside the provision of radiotherapy services in London and concentrate on those in Essex. It is worth remembering that between 5 and 10 per cent. of cancer patients travel from Essex to London units for specialist treatments, including radiotherapy. That is a choice for their GPs and for those involved in their care. We are happy for that to continue.

Patients in the Southend health authority area are served by two units, the Southend hospital and the Rochford hospital, which together form a twin-site district general hospital. It is a major acute hospital with 453 beds and an accident and emergency department. The unit's work is well respected and is of high quality overall. There is no doubt that Southend and Rochford hospitals are held in the highest regard by local people, who have written expressing their confidence in the staff at the cancer unit.

Right hon. and hon. Members have seen the regional strategy documents, and I believe that they have had an opportunity to discuss them. They have seen the departmental advice on the provision of radiotherapy centres. I shall be happy to provide appropriate extracts if it would be of assistance. Perhaps my hon. Friends will let me know.

There has been some misunderstanding about what might happen at Southend. The majority of services for cancer patients will continue to be based at district level, including Southend. These services will include surgery, some chemotherapy, certain other treatments, diagnostic and screening work and, of course, terminal care. Only radiotherapy and other related specialist treatments would require attendance at the proposed regional centres. The regional cancer treatment centres, where radiotherapists, their equipment, and oncologists would be based, are, I understand, intended to provide a high level of medical expertise as locally as possible. The local element is regarded as important, but the removal of radiotherapy facilities from a district should not entail the downgrading of its other cancer treatment facilities.

I understand that, in the case of Southend, in effect only the radiotherapy equipment would be affected, leaving most of the other cancer treatment facilities to continue. Therefore, we hope that the removal of a radiotherapy machine would not substantially affect the provision of these other services. I hope that the regional health authority will take into consideration the fact that radiotherapy is a factor in attracting top quality medical staff to the unit at Southend, and that any change should be so arranged as not to damage the career prospects of the staff concerned.

I make it clear that Southend's cancer unit will not close, as suggested by the Southend *Evening Echo*. Only radiotherapy and associated facilities are the subject of discussion. The people in Southend have been wrongly informed that all local cancer facilities will cease. It is not the case that the cancer unit will close. I hope that I can make that as clear as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I note the presence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon). The removal of the radiotherapy treatment will force people to travel about 40 miles. Is the Minister aware of the hardship, inconvenience, pain and distress that would be caused to the large number of patients who would have to travel this distance? Does she suggest that a unit without radiotherapy treatment would in any sense be a comprehensive treatment unit?

Mrs. Currie: I acknowledge the presence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West. I am pleased that he is able to represent his constituency in this important matter. I am sure that the regional health authority is taking into account the travel required. I emphasise again that, if Southend people believe that their cancer unit will close, they are incorrect. The only discussion is about the machinery with which the radiotherapy treatment and related facilities are directly associated. Only a small number of staff associated with radiotherapy facilities might be transferred from Southend. The majority of the staff at the cancer unit will remain to provide other services for local patients. As we develop services for local patients, some other work will become so much more important.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The Minister has been very kind and courteous. Does she seriously suggest that a unit with cancer diagnostic facilities and terminal care but with no treatment facilities is a cancer treatment unit in any sense?

Mrs. Currie: On the contrary, as my hon. Friend will know, radiotherapy is part of cancer treatment. However, it is not the only form of treatment. Surgery and chemotherapy are important, and we expect chemotherapy to become more important in years to come. For a patient receiving treatment for a year or more, radiotherapy may form only a small part of that treatment. It depends on the case and the circumstances.

I hope that my hon. Friend does not in any way denigrate terminal care or long-term care. Some cancer patients may require that for many years when radiotherapy has proved to be unsuitable or no longer satisfactory for them. Radiotherapy is a part of cancer treatment, but by no means all of it. I am sure that the staff who work in other parts of the unit involved in surgery and chemotherapy would want the care that they provide for patients to be taken into account.

As part of the preparation for today's debate I asked whether I could be informed about community services for cancer patients in the Southend area. I am pleased to say that not only will the community services for cancer patients in Southend continue, but that they will be improved under the proposed arrangements. Southend has a private eight-bed hospice supported financially by the district health authority. In Southend there are two home care nurses who provide a similar service to Macmillan nurses. I understand that there are advertisements for a further two nurses, so the service will be doubled. A combined terminal illness care team will be functioning by the end of the year. All those are services for cancer patients, especially for those for whom care has come too late or those for whom an apparent cure at some earlier stage proved to be inadequate.

Dr. M. S. Miller: I apologise for referring to something which the hon. Lady mentioned a few moments ago, but my attention was distracted. I return to the point made by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) about the size of the catchment area. I hope that the hon. Lady and her advisers will reconsider that. I accept that nine centres are too many for a population of about 4 million.

[Dr. M. S. Miller]

However, I do not accept that there should be one radiotherapy centre for 1 million people. We should be able to do a little better than that.

Although the hon. Lady is right in saying that there are many other treatments for cancer, radiotherapy is still applied and will, in all probability, become even better in the future. In my opinion, in areas where there is one centre for 1 million people it may mean that many cancer sufferers will have to travel long distances. The hon. Lady's Department should be considering something better than that, perhaps one centre for 700,000 or 800,000 people—certainly more than one per million.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman speaks from a background of medical knowledge. If he has evidence to support the points that he is making perhaps, he would be kind enough to write to me or to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State so that we can ensure that full consideration is given to the general points that he has made.

The North East Thames regional health authority's original proposal would have had five centres for 4·4 million people. Its revised proposal now has six centres for 4·4 million people and, should the representations of colleagues from Southend be taken into account, it may well mean seven centres. There comes a point where one simply gets back to nine centres, and I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree that nine centres would be too many. The adequate number is a matter for the regional health authority and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the light of representations made, if necessary, later on.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I appeal to the Minister to look seriously at the advice that she is being given. Who told her that the Southend hospice is funded by the district health authority? I am the president of the hospice, and I have to engage with my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) in raising vast sums. The hospice is funded, not by the district health authority, but by voluntary donations. Where is the Minister getting the information from? I appeal to her to check on it. We are providing home care services in the hospice because of the disappearance of Macmillan nurses. It is not a district health authority function. We are doing that with voluntary funds, raised by lotteries, functions, sponsored walks up Big Ben—everything under the sun. I appeal to the Minister to check on her sources of information about the Southend hospice. I am president and attend every meeting. I can assure her that it is not funded by the district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks from a position closer to the circumstances than I do. I should like to thank him and all those in Southend who raise money for the hospice, and indeed hospices such as the one mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon. There is no doubt that the hospice movement, which grew out of urgent local need and has tapped a source of local generosity and wholeness of spirit, has shown the Health Service how to do things, but my understanding is that some of the money for the hospice — some of the running costs — is found within the district. I am happy to check on that and I shall write to my hon. Friend the Member on that point. However, I am sure my hon. Friend will accept that the community services for cancer have not been as good as they could have been in Southend, and perhaps as a result of the current discussions the district health authority and the regional health authority are giving attention to that. We should see a substantial improvement within a matter of months. I am sure that my hon. Friend will not only take careful note of that, but will ensure that those promises are fulfilled.

Mr. Amess: May I make two points before the Minister concludes——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman must be brief. He cannot make another speech.

Mr. Amess: With regard to radiotherapy treatment, I understand the point about the closure of the Southend unit. I emphasise that for the people in south-east Essex the continuation of radiotherapy treatment is crucial. Some 60 per cent. of cancer patients in Basildon receive radiotherapy treatment at Southend. This is the final thing that I want to ask the Minister. I realise that it is difficult in this debate for her to say anything positive before there has been full consultation, but before any decision is reached will she please ask her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to receive a deputation of south-east Members, obviously including my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon)—the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry — and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor)?

Mrs. Currie: I hear what my hon. Friend says. It has just occurred to me that it might be more useful to wait and see what consideration the regional health authority gives to the representations that are being made. When the consultation document is published and the formal statutory consultation prodedure is undertaken, it may be possible to consider that. I need to take advice on that, as I am sure my hon. Friend will appreciate. I am always glad to meet hon. Friends, particularly those who are making the effort to improve health services in their neigbourhood, and who put to us the case of improving those services. I shall attempt to be as helpful as I can to my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West and to my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East and for Basildon.

I want to ensure that we put it on record today that the radiotherapy unit is not the whole of the cancer unit. The radiotherapy treatment is not the whole of the cancer treatment. I was moved to read the comments in the *Evening Echo* of 20 October, in which the circumstances of Mr. and Mrs Jim Mullan of Northview Drive, Westcliff were described. I understand that, sadly, they spent seven years watching their daughter Elizabeth Pollard battle against cancer, a battle that she lost in April 1984 at the age of 35. I quote from the newspaper:

"Mrs. Mullan . . . said 'It was hell, but thanks to Southend Hospital centre Elizabeth was allowed to die in dignity and reasonable comfort.

Towards the end she found it difficult to breathe, there was no way she could have travelled for treatment.' "

There is no suggestion whatever that Elizabeth or anyone like her will have to travel for treatment. Hospice care, terminal care, long-term care, surgery, chemotherapy and many other aspects of care for cancer patients for

whom radiotherapy has proved to be ineffective will continue to be provided at Southend in the caring and responsible way in which it has been provided so far. The unit and the treatment that it provides in these areas can continue to command the confidence and, I hope, support of local people for many years to come.

I want to consider the pattern of referrals in the neighbourhood. It has been estimated that at present the radiotherapy unit at Southend attracts some 93 per cent. of local referrals. It also attracts a high proportion of local referrals from the district and patients from Basildon and Thurrock. The unit at Oldchurch has a comparatively low local referral rate. Only about 50 per cent. of patients from Barking, Havering and Brentwood go to that unit; the rest travel to London. No doubt that is a factor in the regional health authority's consideration of where to locate a possible regional centre.

The completion of the M25 has some influence on the area. Those hon. Members with constituencies a great distance from the M25 will be interested to note the major economic and social changes which the completion of this important capital programme will bring to the south-east.

Worries have been raised about travelling to other areas for treatment. I was sad to read an article in the *Evening Echo* on Tuesday 21 October, which implied that people would not seek treatment elsewhere. The article stated:

"Cancer patients will give up and die rather than make the 60-mile round trip for treatment at Harold Wood, a hospital consultant claimed on TV last night.

On BBC's London Plus Southend hospital's Dr. Colin Trasker said: 'There is no doubt people will just give up their treatment and not go.'

Interviewer Antonia Higgs said: 'You mean they'd die sooner rather than make the journey?' Dr. Trasker agreed."

I hope that my hon. Friends will join me in urging all concerned to make use of facilities—especially facilities for cancer patients — wherever and in whatever circumstances these may be provided. I hope that we never discourage patients from seeking the treatment that they need. That may entail travelling to the other ends of the country for treatment for rare conditions. While every effort is made to provide services as locally as possible to the patient, I hope that all concerned with the care, treatment and advice to patients will encourage them to make use of facilities wherever they may be.

It is a fact that 80 per cent. of patients attending the radiotherapy treatment department at Southend travel by car. Generally, patients in Essex drive or are driven to hospital for radiotherapy treatment, rather than use public transport. The ambulance service will continue to be provided for those cancer patients who require it. However, it is worth remembering that many radiotherapy patients are not ill at all and are therefore capable of driving or travelling to the hospital under their own steam.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Does the hon. Lady appreciate how that service works? The service is voluntary and patients sometimes travel as far as 30 miles. More than one patient may be involved in each case and sometimes three or four patients may travel in one car. The first patient to be collected travels in the car for a considerable time in a journey to and from hospital. It might be an idea to examine that service. I speak from personal knowledge, as I had a sister who died of cancer last year. She lived about 30 miles outside London and had to travel to Middlesex hospital. That was a gruelling journey if she was the first to be picked up and the last to be dropped off.

Mrs. Currie: I note the hon. Gentleman's point. I should like to put on record my Department's appreciation of all those people involved as voluntary drivers in that service. It is an important and valuable provision. The ambulance service is available if required and I hope that, where appropriate, it will be used.

I want to mention the details of equipment under consideration in Southend. The current radiotherapy equipment at Southend consists of a linear accelerator, —a Linac—a cobalt machine, a deep X-ray machine, a simulator and a planning computer. The Linac was bought in 1982, at a price of £350,000, and required a further £140,000 to install. The other equipment has been purchased since 1980. I understand that the cobalt machine was a reconditioned unit and may therefore soon reach the end of its useful life.

In preparation for the debate I asked for information on the percentage usage of radiotherapy equipment in Southend. I understand that the number of patients treated there is reasonable and typical for a unit of that size. The expected number of "fields"—single treatments — per day for such equipment is about 30 to 50. Southend's average is 43 for the Linac and 50 for the cobalt machine.

One factor that we must bear in mind is the efficient use of expensive equipment. I am taking advice on how many patients could or should be treated on the more modern equipment now available, especially as more of our patients are still active during the period of their being treated, and therefore have responsibilities to their employers and families. In the recent past capital has been the limitation, with few staffing problems. However, as capital and equipment have become available, some of the limitations have involved the numbers and availability of qualified staff. Some of our discussions now have to take place against a rather different background from that appertaining 10 years ago.

I understand that the region's intention is that the radiotherapy equipment currently at Southend should be transferred to the new regional cancer treatment centres wherever possible. I express no opinion on that; I am merely trying to set out the proposals. The region has advised that it is probable, but not certain, that equipment currently in use at Southend will be transferred to Harold Wood. That will depend on the timing of the prospective closure and development. The proposed radiotherapy unit at Harold Wood will be able to provide up to 3,000 new courses of treatment per annum by virtue of its greater population base. That would meet the requirement for a regional centre. Indeed, we expect that it will attract between 1,700 and 3,000 new courses per annum, depending on whether it establishes itself as a centre for excellence, which I am sure we all hope will be the case. It is then proposed that the Harold Wood centre should be linked with Basildon, Thurrock and Southend districts. I understand that to be the broad basis of the proposal.

I wish to mention other service improvements in Southend that will help not only cancer patients but others. Additional services for patients include a 20-place day hospital for the elderly at Westcliff hospital and an intensive care unit for mentally ill patients at Runwell hospital. As part of caring in the community, there are community care centres on Canvey Island and in Southend for the mentally ill; homes for mentally handicapped people in Benfleet and Shoeburyness; a team of staff, including six nurses, to care for mentally handicapped

[Mrs. Currie]

people in the community; and a group home for former psychiatric patients in Rochford. There are also planned major developments for Rochford hospital costing £5·5 million to build and £1·1 million a year to run, comprising a rehabilitation department, four wards with 96 beds for the elderly and three day hospitals for the elderly, elderly mentally infirm and the mentally ill. We hope that they will be completed by 1988. I hope that my hon. Friends welcome those improvements and changes, which I am sure they will agree show that the NHS in their constituencies is very much safe with us.

The North East Thames regional health authority is anxious to improve its services for cancer patients. The strategy report that was accepted in May was ambitious and broad ranging. Whatever it decides to do, whatever views the local district health authorities may take, whatever decision the Secretary of State may be asked to take, I am sure my hon. Friends will agree that the objective of the regional health authority is to provide the best possible cancer services for the people whom it is charged to serve with multidisciplinary teams, with a full range of diagnostic equipment, with better links for the local community and with better care for those whose cancers have defeated us.

I hope that all concerned will accept that the regional health authority and the district health authorities are operating from the very highest motives and are concerned only to achieve the best service for all, including those in Southend, Basildon and elsewhere.

Orthopaedic Treatment (Portsmouth)

12.54 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss orthopaedic treatment in the city of Portsmouth.

It is fortunate that I should be able to raise this issue today as it is only three days since I was able to intervene in an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on the treatment of kidney patients at another of Portsmouth's hospitals—St. Mary's.

I assure my hon. Friend the Minister that my area is grateful for the way in which the National Health Service operates. The Wessex region is one of growth and development. It has experienced considerable improvements, especially during the past seven or eight years. Only today, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services announced an £8 million expansion programme for hospital development at St. Mary's hospital. The Portsmouth and South East Hampshire district health authority is able to assure local Members of Parliament that it has never been faced with cuts. That is the background against which I want to discuss orthopaedic treatment.

The last issue of *Link*, the regional health authority's newspaper, said that there was extremely good news in the region. It was that waiting lists for operations had been considerably reduced on the previous year and that the reduction was greater in Wessex than in any other region in the country. That was indeed welcome news and I am sure that the Department, area and district health authorities and medical staff should be congratulated accordingly. It was, however, cold comfort for one group of people—those waiting for orthopaedic treatment at the Queen Alexandra hospital in Portsmouth. The orthopaedic department at the Queen Alexandra hospital is especially successful. It has dealt with local people's needs extremely efficiently. Indeed, it is regarded as one of the most efficient in the country. Although the hospital is relatively new, it has suffered serious water penetration around the operating theatres. This fine hospital complex has some 17 theatres, but no fewer than seven have been affected and been taken out of use at some time. Not all 17 are suitably equipped for orthopaedic patients, however, so about half of the available theatres suitable for orthopaedic patients have been out of operation at some time. As a result, the department has had to concentrate on emergency and traumatic cases, and people awaiting elective surgery, especially hip replacement operations, have had the date of their treatment set back. It is the uncertainty about the dates on which elective surgery can be carried out which is most upsetting to patients. Of course they object to having to wait—almost everyone would like to have at once the operation that is necessary—but a wait can be accepted as long as the operation is performed on the due date. However, to be told that there will be a delay is extremely worrying for patients who are already tense knowing that they are to undergo major surgery.

At one point there were six consecutive weeks during which no elective surgery could be carried out. That is the point to which I wish to draw the Minister's attention. The medical staff and ancillary workers have, without

exaggeration, worked heroically under those circumstances and they have now achieved the point in their operations programme that they would have reached had there not been the six-weeks' delay.

That is remarkable, but it means that the beds available in the wards supporting the orthopaedic department are now full. To quote the words used by an administrator this morning when I checked on the facts, the place is jammed solid. That means that there is a new restricting factor—not just the limitation on the operating theatre space but the availability of beds for patients immediately after undergoing the operation.

That is a matter of grave concern locally. It may be felt that time alone can bring a solution, but that is not true. Last year, when the waiting lists for orthopaedic operations was growing, it was found possible to arrange for hip replacement operations to take place at the private King George's hospital at Midhurst. I am told that this year space is also available at the Lord Mayor Treloar hospital at Alton. Both those hospitals would have space in their operating theatres and accommodation facilites for orthopaedic patients from Portsmouth to have their hip operations.

I am sure that I need not tell my hon. Friend the Minister that the success rate for hip replacements is high. They are a good investment of NHS money and the improvement in the quality of life which a hip replacement can bring about is dramatic.

The problem is that the regional health authority has not found it possible to provide funds this year to continue the programme of passing patients into the private sector, where facilities remain available. That is extremely sad. I understand the pressures on the regional authority. No doubt it is worried about the cost of the work at the Queen Alexandra hospital, although that, after all, is basically a matter for its capital programme rather than its revenue costs.

It cannot be argued that because the operating theatres are out of use for a period there is a financial saving at the district level which could be used to send patients elsewhere. The orthopaedic department remains where it is. The staff are there. There is a need for a once-and-for-all relatively small injection of cash to the regional health authority, specifically and immediately earmarked for one purpose only — for hip replacement operations during the period that we are awaiting the restoration of the full operating capacity of the Queen Alexandra hospital.

I shall not stand up again in 12 months' time and repeat this demand. The cause of the problem is completely outside the control of the NHS. It is a matter of grave concern that doctors and others who are able and willing to carry out the operations simply lack the space in which to do it. Each time the sum, which is as little as £2,500, becomes available an operation can take place. A relatively small sum provided once and once only would allow the orthopaedic department of this highly-regarded hospital to continue to reduce the waiting list for elective surgery.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will feel able to draw this one substantial problem to the attention of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has shown direct interest in the length of waiting lists. The problem could be solved with a relatively small injection of extra cash. That would bring untold benefits to my constituents and others in the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire district health authority.

1.6 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I should like briefly to support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) about the importance of orthopaedic treatment in the NHS, especially in the Wessex region. The region has been fortunate in that the revisions in the RAWP formula have improved our previous position. We were worried that too great a proportion of NHS funds seemed to be concentrated in London and that our region did not receive an adequate share of the national resources for the NHS. We hope that the present trend will continue and that any review of RAWP will continue to give the Wessex region a high priority.

The region has a higher than average proportion of elderly and retired people. More than 30 per cent. of my constituents are of retirement age or above. That high proportion of elderly people gives rise to special problems, not least problems affecting the NHS.

Orthopaedic surgery is important in treating the elderly. Too often we become seduced by the high-technology areas of medicine, about which we hear so much in our national newspapers. I fear that some of the London teaching hospitals, which may be more involved in those areas than any others, grab both too much of the headlines and too great a proportion of the cash available, leaving areas such as orthopaedic surgery out in the cold. That is undesirable and unfair because, although nobody would deny that saving life is important, the quality of life is equally, if not more, important. I recollect a member of my family who was terminally ill saying to me that what mattered to him was the quality of life. Certainly for people in Wessex, especially the elderly, it is vital that we ensure that in the latter part of their lives they can enjoy comfort, mobility and freedom from pain.

In those areas orthopaedic surgery can play an important part. Consequently, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can confirm that the Wessex region will receive high priority and, if possible, an improved allocation of the national cake, particularly in relation to orthopaedic surgery.

1.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I have been asked to respond to the debate.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) on his assiduity in securing a debate on such an important subject. He will realise from my remarks that the debate is very timely for the Portsmouth area. I know that there are immediate concerns in Portsmouth, particularly over the repairs at the Queen Alexandra hospital. I shall come to that shortly, but I must first thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), who put the argument for RAWP very succinctly. We have just debated services in Essex, yet we can see that there is also a need for services in other parts of the country to be improved. My hon. Friend has also shown how RAWP has helped people in those parts of the country that have been underfunded.

I have not yet had an opportunity to visit any of the facilities run by the Health Service in or around Bournemouth, but during the party conference I had an opportunity to visit my uncle who was resident in a home

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

for physically handicapped people, run by a voluntary agency in Bournemouth. He has been an orthopaedic patient for some time, and is now slowly recovering. I should like to put on record my appreciation of all the staff at the Carlton Dene home in Bournemouth, as they have given my uncle and the other residents there excellent care. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit, and it helped to remind me that we are really talking about individuals in discussing the Health Service.

Great speeches were made at Bournemouth, and I shall come later to the speech made at the conference by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, but ultimately we are talking about individuals and their families. However, I was pleased to note the remarks made about the area by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West.

In this country, orthopaedic services, and particularly waiting times for out-patient appointments and in-patient treatment, were studied in great depth in a report published in 1981, which has become known as the Duthie report. It is the report of a working party chaired by professor R. B. Duthie, Nuffield professor of orthopaedic surgery at Oxford university. I shall therefore take much of the medical information that I have on this important subject from the report.

Orthopaedic surgery is mainly concerned with the repair and reconstruction of the skeletal system. Much of the work used to be mainly concerned with tuberculosis in children. Many of the existing orthopaedic facilities are in old sanatoria that were used for that purpose. But today tuberculosis in children does not cause the orthopaedic problems that it once did, and paediatric work has developed substantially, and is normally found in paediatric specialty facilities, such as children's hospitals.

Thus the problem mainly occurs among people in the older age groups. Among them, the skeletal system fails most drastically, because it suffers from the effects of degenerative diseases of the joints and fractures of weakened long bones such as the femur. The number of elderly people, and the percentage of the population that they represent, has increased over the past few years, and is expected to increase until the end of the 1980s. In the 1970s, the 65 to 74 years age group made the biggest contribution to the rise, but from 1980 onwards the continuing increase in the number of old people has been due to an enlargement in the group aged 75 and over. About one fifth of them are over 85, although the number of those aged 65 to 74 is decreasing slightly.

We estimate that about 3 million people in this country are aged between 75 and 84, and perhaps soon there will be about 750,000 people aged over 85. You and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, hope, in time, to join them, and we also hope that all the necessary services will be laid on when that time comes. But that change towards a more elderly population has been reflected in the use of orthopaedic beds, and, indeed, of beds in other specialties which treat large numbers of old people. For example, in 1977 the elderly accounted for 5 per cent. more admissions than 10 years before and on average they occupied 11 per cent. more beds. By 1977 about half the available beds were occupied by elderly people and that continues to be so.

In Portsmouth we believe that nearly 70 per cent. of all acute beds are occupied by people aged over 65. The National Health Service is increasingly and substantially a service for the elderly. The increasing numbers of elderly people treated is a reflection of the success of medical treatments for the younger age groups. Our success breeds its own pattern of demand and we must ensure that we can adapt to it.

The increase in the load of illness and disability placed upon the orthopaedic services by the larger number of old people is only part of the explanation. The availability of new and effective measures to meet some of the needs has led to new demands for orthopaedic services. There is no doubt that the radical changes in the surgical treatment of arthritis which followed upon the development of total hip replacement in the early 1960s has led to an enormous demand for orthopaedic resources. Prior to that date osteotomy and arthrodesis operations had a much more restricted application to arthritis and were particularly unsuitable for elderly patients with advanced conditions of the disease. The total hip replacement is one of the most outstanding surgical advances in recent years. From its early restriction to one or two specialist centres, its use has spread to every orthopaedic unit. Knee and other joint replacements follow much the same course.

I was amused and delighted to read paragraph 3.34 of the Duthie report about a promise made 10 years ago. It states:

"In 'The Challenge of Arthritis and Rheumatism'",

a report on problems and progress in health care for rheumatic disorders, which was published in 1977 and edited by Dr. Philip H. N. Wood of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council's epidemiology research unit at the university of Manchester, it is said:

"Hip and knee arthroplasty are rapidly becoming accepted as standard procedures. No joint is safe from the ravages of the disease though, and much research is being directed to replacement arthroplasties that would help the considerable numbers of patients with damaged shoulder, elbow, ankle and finger joints. Moreover, in polyarthritis it is now possible to undertake programmes of principal joint replacement to restore some degree of independence and activity to patients who previously would have become totally crippled."

I have seen the truth of that promise in my own area. It was a joy to see. The Southern Derbyshire health authority covers six constituencies, including mine. One of my first visits after being appointed Minister was to the Derbyshire royal infirmary's rehabilitation unit in Derby. It was set up in 1973 at the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) when he was Secretary of State for Social Services. The two units have become internationally known.

I saw the full range of diagnostic, surgical and rehabilitation facilities for patients suffering from a variety of chronic conditions, of which arthritis is probably the most well known. I saw occupational therapy, physiotherapy and hand surgery facilities. That specialty is affected equally by the rising numbers of elderly.

I was particularly moved to meet a lady of about my own age who had spent nine years in a wheelchair. She was walking around happily having been repaired in numerous places. She said that she now needed her ankles repairing because after many years of being in a wheelchair they had become weak. Now that she is walking with the aid of only a stick the ankles are showing signs of the degeneration that had necessitated earlier operations. She is now looking forward to having her ankles fixed.

That is a modern miracle but it involves an enormous amount of time, skill and effort. If one joint is affected in a patient, the probablity is that others will be. As skills to

help these patients improve, pressures on orthopaedic facilities increase quite sharply. The number of patients awaiting treatment may change very little, but the number of interventions that can be made per patient may increase sharply. Therefore, the facilities can rapidly become overstretched.

I have seen the work that is being done in conjunction with the Derby royal infirmary at Bretby hall orthopaedic hospital, which is my constituency. There we see, perhaps, part of the answer. The 60 beds at Bretby hall are entirely for planned surgery and are retained only for the purpose in accordance with recommendations made in the Duthie report. Bretby hall is now able to do full hip replacements in an hour and a half in the operating theatre instead of the four or five hours that used to be necessary to perform the operation. Patients go home in 12 days. I am told that that is not quite a record, but it is standard procedure at Bretby hall. I hope that the expertise and skills that go into that sort of speedy and effective use of resources can be examined and perhaps copied elsewhere.

We must be aware that our elderly population my be much more adaptable than we think and may find it much easier to cope with some interventions than perhaps we were ready to give it credit for in the past. On one occasion recently the league of friends at Bretby hall was asked to make money available for a set of Sony Walkmans. The league asked why this equipment was needed and the explanation was that knee joint replacement operations and the replacement of similar joints can be done under local anaesthetic. When this is done the patients are alert and awake and it is quite a noisy procedure. It was therefore suggested that patients might prefer to listen to Elgar or whatever while the operation takes place.

At a later date I visited the hospital and met a number of my constituents, including one elderly lady who had had an operation to replace a knee joint under local anaesthetic. She had thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I asked her whether she had made use of a Sony Walkman, to which she responded with a firm "Of course not". She added, "I wanted to hear what was going on and I asked for a running commentary."

Demand is increasing sharply because the possibilities of successful interventions are increasing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North has said, over 80 per cent. of these operations are now successful. People are queuing up for them and each patient may find it is not only the most serious joints that can be dealt with. It may be that other joints can be assisted. We might expect that in future patients will come forward several times for work to be done. If the intervention is no longer an unpleasant experience and if, as my elderly constituent suggested, it is becoming an interesting experience, we can expect that demand will continue to increase. On the other hand, my own experience suggests that by judicious use of existing facilities we can ensure that we are able to respond to demand. Indeed, we are determined to do so.

I shall give the House some of the overall figures that will put my general remarks into perspective. The trauma and orthopaedic specialty nationally covers a wide range of work and in 1978 it handled fewer than half a million patients. In that year it dealt with 441,000. By 1985, 527,300 were dealt with by the specialty. That is an increase of 19 per cent. In other words, for every five patients dealt with in 1978, six were dealt with in 1985. In the light of the circumstances that I have described, that is an amazing achievement. In March 1979, the number of cases on the waiting list was 133,500. By September 1985, the most recent date for which I have figures, the figure was 129,300, representing a 3·2 per cent. fall. In March 1979, there were 13,500 urgent cases on the waiting list. By September 1985, the figure had dropped to 9,623, representing a fall of 14·2 per cent.

Mr. Butterfill: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the waiting list figures would have been considerably better had it not been for the health workers' strike?

Mrs. Currie: Absolutely. I am willing to confirm that. There have been two significant NHS strikes in the past decade—one in 1978 and one in 1982. The 1982 strike had devastating effects on waiting lists. We have endeavoured to recover from that. However, in most specialities we have not only recovered from 1982 but, as in the cases I have described, we are now showing a considerable improvement, even on the 1978-79 figures. We have not finished yet. The estimated waiting time, in median terms, in 1979 was 13 weeks. In 1984, it was 12 weeks. The figure has been sticky. It has not dropped in the way we should have liked.

The first hip replacements were done in the late 1940s. I was reminded recently, after I made an injudicious comment that they were unknown 20 years ago—they were very much known 20 years ago—that the most effective ones were beginning to be done about 38 years ago. In 1978, the number of hip replacements stood at about 28,000. In 1983, the figure was 37,000 and, in 1984, it was 38,000. My hon. Friends will be aware of the promise made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State during his speech at Bournemouth in which he said:

"We have raised that number to 38,000 today. But I aim to do more. By 1990 I want to see that number approaching 50,000."

A figure of 50,000 would be almost double that which existed about 12 years ago. We are determined to achieve that objective. In 1978, the waiting time for hip replacements was about 23 weeks. After the NHS strike in that year, the waiting time rose to 25 weeks. By 1983, we had got it back down to 24 weeks. It is still at that level nationally. Obviously, the figure varies a great deal. The target time for non-emergency treatment is one year. Nationally, on average, the hip replacement programme is within that target.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West will bear with me if I direct much of my attention to the Queen Alexandra hospital in Portsmouth. I listened with great care to what my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North said. Much of what he said was right. I suspect that in his position I should have used much stronger language. The major part of the Queen Alexandra hospital was completed eight years ago, although there has been a hospital on the site since 1908. The new hospital was built by John Laing. Two major repair jobs have had to be undertaken, and that has had a drastic effect on patient services. All 14 of the main operating theatres closed for five weeks from 11 August so that badly defective concrete floors could be replaced. It is estimated that the repairs will cost £200,000. The theatres are on two floors in two groups of seven. It was hoped to open some operating theatres on the bottom floor while later work continued above. Only six other main theatres are available for use—five at St. Mary's hospital, which is the other district general hospital, and one at Gosport war memorial hospital.

[Mrs. Currie]

About 600 non-urgent operations were delayed, and only essential surgery was possible. The possibility of using two neighbouring private hospitals on an agency basis was explored. I am glad to report that since these events began the hospital dealt with all emergency and trauma cases without any problems. There was not a problem for emergency work or for anyone brought in off the street, but there was a continuing serious problem for all planned work.

The defective floors were laid about 10 years ago by subcontractors to John Laing which have since gone out of business. Talks are continuing between John Laing and the Wessex regional health authority, and the legal implications are being considered. My hon. Friend will understand if I say very little more on that matter.

In addition, as my hon. Friend mentioned, 75 beds on the top floor of the hospital have been put out of commission for three months because of extensive water damage to the hospital's flat roof. Repairs will cost an estimated £300,000. The flat roof construction of the hospital was a recommended technique for all major public buildings when Queen Alexandra hospital was designed. However, the method has been discontinued. The life expectancy of such flat roofing appears to be about 10 years. The regional health authority considers that there is no liability on the part of the contractor.

Those of us involved with the National Health Service and with other public building matters, such as municipal housing, in that period might well have wished that flat roofs were banned a long time ago. But they were not; they now are. We have to pick up the tab for the repairs that should have been unnecessary. The circumstances in Portsmouth fully bear out my hon. Friend's remarks.

Work on the first major repairs began in August and will not be completed until February 1987. My Department accepts that this is unfortunate. It is essentially a matter for the relevant health authorities to resolve, but Ministers are taking a close interest, as we are concerned about the effect on patient services. We are assured that the decision to close the beds and to reduce surgical services was not taken lightly. The health authorities concerned have been making every effort to ensure that the impact on patient care is kept to a minimum.

For the purpose of the debate, I checked the current situation. I shall endeavour to give my hon. Friend as much informatin as I can. The 14 theatres were indeed closed, as I mentioned. Seven theatres were opened on 22 September. I understand that five of these theatres are available for orthopaedic work. The total in-patient waiting list on 1 April 1986 was 1,136. By 30 September 1986 it had risen to 1,403. However, I am told that only 11·6 per cent. of patients waited for more than a year. It is worth reflecting that the equivalent figure for the rest of the country is about 30 per cent. Although there has been a substantial diminution in services, Portsmouth, until that date, had received a relatively better service than many other parts of the country. I am sure the people of Portsmouth appreciate that and indeed have come to expect it, as, of course, is their right.

Last year some hip replacements were done privately at the King Edward hospital at Midhurst. At least one orthopaedic surgeon has been trying to persuade the health authority to release more money for hip replacements to be done at Midhurst, where a good service was provided for local people. Another orthopaedic consultant has let us know that his waiting list has grown so fast that he cannot take on any more people for elective surgery, which is a very sad reflection on the circumstances in Portsmouth. I am told that that consultant is immensely hard-working and does as much as might be expected of him and that his patients respect and appreciate his work. We are conscious of the accuracy of my hon. Friend's remarks.

In June, the Portsmouth health authority asked the Wessex regional health authority for extra non-recurring revenue so that hip replacements could be contracted out to the private sector. I understand that at that time the answer was no. The authority asked again in September and has put it on the agenda for its district review in December. The authority also said that it was prepared to forgo for two years capital money that it has allocated to other services to reduce hip replacement waiting lists. We appreciate the efforts made by this district health authority to come to grips with the problem. I hope that it will not be necessary to damage or postpone plans for other services. However, if that is the only way we will be able to improve the waiting lists for hip replacements, it is for the district health authority, in consultation with the regional health authority, to decide what it wants to do.

I mentioned that the debate is very timely. My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North may not be aware of the fact that the district general manager is meeting clinicians on Monday 3 November to consider a possible reorganisation of orthopaedic surgery, with a view to expanding in-house facilities. Serious and urgent consideration is being given to the ways in which existing facilities could be utilised in order to get waiting lists down.

The health authority is looking at doubling day surgery facilities when the next stage of repairs is complete. Given the remarks I made earlier about the changes in anaesthesia and the techniques of orthopaedic surgery, it may be possible to do more of the work on a day basis and release other resources for more serious cases in orthopaedics or possibly for cases in some other specialties, which may otherwise have to wait if orthopaedics is to be advanced. The possibility of expanding day surgery is very worthwhile.

My hon. Friends will know that nationally the number of day surgery cases has doubled in the past six years and now about one million cases each year are being attended to in that way. I have had treatment of that kind. It is nice to be able to go home when one has finished, provided that adequate arrangements are being made at home to prepare for the patient and that that is what the patient wants to do. It is marvellous to think that people may have full hip replacements and major joint operations that turn them from complete cripples into walking people in a matter of weeks and that it may be possible, subject to the most stringent controls over the assessment of the patients, for them to get some of the work done on a day basis and be able to pop in from time to time to get the next bit done. That would be an adequate use of resources.

I hope that what I have said has shown sufficiently that we are taking the problems being put to us by colleagues in Portsmouth very seriously. It is a serious matter. In my judgment, it should not have happened. The problems we face with this building now require to be put right properly. It is no good simply wringing our hands over

what has happened in the past. An enormous amount of money, nearly £500,000, is now being spent on putting those construction problems right. We are assured that the region and the district are taking seriously the effect that that has had on waiting lists, especially in orthopaedics, and that every effort is now being made to get to grips with the problem. I am confident that, within a short time, efforts will have been made, and I hope that funds are found locally, to ensure that the waiting lists can now be reduced.

In orthopaedics we have a service that never used to exist and was not possible and we have a pattern of disability among a section of the population that never used to be a problem because few people reached such old age. We now have both. It is a challenge to the Health Service which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, other Ministers and those whom we have appointed to the district and health authorities are taking seriously. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North for giving us this opportunity to discuss these matters.

London Ambulance Service

1.38 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I wish to raise aspects of the London Ambulance Service. I am grateful to the Minister for being here at this time. We have this practice of airing grievances before the Adjournment and my grievance is deep. Although I appreciate the Minister's presence, I make no apology for raising this matter because I do not think that she understands — I hope that she will by the time I have finished — the extent of the inconvenience and distress being caused by her Department and its works to thousands of people in London and to the employees of the London Ambulance Service, as well as the knock-on effects on doctors, out-patient departments and families throughout the metropolis.

In reply to earlier debates, the hon. Lady properly stressed the nature and concern of care and, in particular, the effect upon the individual. On several occasions she has reminded us of happy outcomes and marvellous things that the Health Service is doing. I am afraid that she will have little scope for that in her reply to what I have to say today because I believe that there has been a major sequence of maladminstration in the Health Service, which has caused a great deal of submerged unhappiness. I look to her to put it right. If she is concerned to achieve happy outcomes such as she has cited, I hope that she and her senior colleagues will do something about the matter that I now raise.

The North East Thames region has featured in a previous Adjournment debate, and my constituency of Newham is in it. We have our own district health authority, which is subject to the regional health authority. However, as the hon. Lady and others may know, the London Ambulance Service is run on an agency basis by the South West Thames regional authority for all the authorities in London. That causes an administrative layer and difficulties that might not appear elsewhere, but I fear that what has happened in London is happening elsewhere, although in London the administrative knock-on effect may be greater because of that structure. I should prefer the London Ambulance Service to be responsible to an all-London elected body but, alas, the Government have not regarded that and the service was removed from the care of the Greater London Council some time ago.

When we think of ambulances, we think of the emergency ambulances rushing through the streets, perhaps with a case aboard, and we drive to the side of the road to let them by. However, two to three times the amount of mileage is done on non-emergency services, carrying people who have to attend outpatient clinics and calling for them at their homes. Most often those people are not on stretchers. Sometimes they are in wheelchairs, but sometimes they are classified as ambulatory. It is to those non-emergency services in London and elswhere that I refer exclusively today.

In 1983 the Government established a Rayner-style departmental survey of the service. Under the guidance of the chairman of the East Birmingham health authority, Mr. James Ackers, the assistant district administrator, Mr. B. R. Payne, reported in March 1984. It was a long report and I do not intend to quote from it at length. The upshot was that Mr. Payne believed that there was some misuse of non-emergency ambulance services by people who

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

might have walked. The letter that I shall read later talks about people getting to the hospital by other means rather than being carried by those expensive services.

In addition, there was some administrative slippage in the service, and Mr. Payne thought that a link between those who paid for it, particularly the district health authority, and those who used it, would lead to greater efficiency, although in his report he said that he thought that the extent of misuse was no more than 4 to 10 per cent. Of course, one man's idea of misuse may be another man's idea of non-misuse—it is a variable term.

Mr. Payne's calculations showed that there could be a saving in expenditure of about £9·4 million. The Secretary of State said in a letter dated 17 March 1984:

"The report identifies as the major weakness in the control of the non-emergency service the fact that those DHAs which do not have the responsibilty of managing it are able to make demands on it without direct and immediate financial consequences to themselves. The main recommendation is that the ambulance service should provide a given quantity of service to each DHA at an agreed cost and the DHA should develop a means of including an agreed element in unit or clinical budgets for patient transport. It would be open to districts to buy in part of the service from other public agencies or the private sector if this was more cost-effective, providing the quality of the service was maintained."

I emphasise those final words. In the middle of his statement, the Secretary of State used a deterministic phrase when he said that the service

"should provide a given quantity of service to each DHA".

In other words, the superior authority will decide how much is to be provided and that will be that unless very stretched financial resources are used for buying in more services. That is administration from above and, I put it to the Minister, a dreadful mistake. The important question is how much will be provided. In London, there is a considerable cut.

On 3 June, I asked the Minister's predecessor:

"What requests have been made by the South-West Thames regional health authority to district health authorities in respect of the use of the London ambulance service; what is the target of that authority's request for redirection in the number of 'non-emergency' cases to be carried?"

He replied:

"In a letter dated 20 March 1986, the South-West Thames regional health authority asked district health authorities to reduce the demand for non-emergency ambulance transport for walking cases by 40 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1986; Vol. 98, c. *540*.]

That is an extraordinary figure—40 per cent. of one category of patients were no longer to be carried by the London Ambulance Service. In fairness, I must stress that it was not 40 per cent. of all non-emergency cases but 40 per cent. ambulatory non-emergency cases—people who might be considered able to walk or to get to hospital by other means. But who decides that?

I have been in correspondence with the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority — Sir Antony Driver—to clarify that draconian cut. I shall quote from his letter because it is fair and instructive to do so. He explained that the patients who were carried and regarded as walking patients were only a proportion of non-emergency cases. On his calculations, the reduction was nearer 12 to 15 per cent. of overall non-emergency cases than the 40 per cent. figure which he had previously given. He said:

"The further complication in using figures such as those which you quote"—

—the Minister's figures, not mine—

"is that the demand level for non-emergency transport is very much a matter of clinical decision, and in the past it is the unfortunate truth that doctors have not been as critical in examining the need for expensive ambulance transport compared with other forms as they might have been, and it is only now, during the period when the service has been unable to fulfil all the demands, that they have been required to be more critical. It is our earnest wish that the Ambulance Service continues to carry all patients for whom ambulance transport is clinically essential."

That is Whitehallese, "Yes, Minister" stuff. I wish to do a little exegesis on that bureaucratic letter. The chairman admits that the health authority has not been able to fulfil all the demands. That happened, of course, because of the cut of 40 per cent. in walking cases required by the Minister and, in turn, by the regional health authority.

The chairman said in his letter that doctors had not been so critical in examining the need for expensive ambulance transport as compared with other forms. What does he mean by "other forms"? Does he expect people literally to walk to hospital, to use the bus for outpatient treatment or to ask friends with cars to give them a lift? Those alternatives may be possible for many people. Doctors would not have expected ambulances for those people, but I understand that in a high proportion of non-emergency cases ambulances are requested by doctors.

What about the phrase "clinically essential" used by the chairman? I would have thought that a caring society and a caring NHS would have preferred either "clinically desirable" or "clinically advisable". We all know that even when in the best of health, on an off day we do not feel too good. Elderly people should not have to find their own way to hospital; it is far better that an ambulance be provided. The Minister has referred to the high proportion of elderly people in the nation. A high proportion of non-emergency ambulance cases are elderly or disabled people.

The 40 per cent. cut has been defended by the chairman, so the hapless district authorities or other regional authorities that rely on him to provide ambulance services must follow suit.

In practice, difficulties can be even greater than I have described. Even given a certain amount of increased efficiency in the handling of ambulances — which was fairly pointed out in the Rayner-style report—difficulties will arise. For example, there will be traffic problems, delays, difficulties with grouping people, waiting for people to leave outpatients, and so on. Theoretical mathematical calculations do not always work out.

In the north- east Thames ambulance division in March this year there were up to 200 cancellations a day, amounting to between 600 and 700 cancellations a week. I understand that in Newham general hospital, which is already 70 per cent. oversubscribed for its emergency services, there was about a 20 per cent. cancellation rate. The effect of that is considerable and the difficulties for the doctors and the outpatients can only be imagined. People wait for the ambulance, but do not know whether it will arrive. I understand that up to 12 cancellations were made for one of my constituents, and many hundreds of them had their appointments cancelled. Anyone who has used the appointment system in an outpatients department knows how complex it is to obtain one. Imagine then sitting waiting for an ambulance that does not arrive.

In north-east London during the last few months, and especially in Newham, the rate of cancellations has

reached alarming and unacceptable proportions, especially for the elderly. Let us consider the difficulties for their families, who want to know whether they have been able to attend for their appointments and whether they can get home again. In many cases patients have been delayed when trying to get home. I have even heard of cases where, because ambulances were not available, the hospital staff —out of the goodness of their hearts—have obtained minicab services, no doubt at extra cost to the NHS.

The Minister has made it plain that she understands the problem. The cumulative anxiety of those wishing to go to hospital, their relatives who may be at work and the people who try to help out is enormous. The Government have created an administrative knock-on effect on an enormous scale. They talk of a caring Health Service, but it is unquestionable that there is a serious effect on family life, on out-patient departments and on the morale of the people who operate the service. The latter are subjected to questioning and abuse when patients arrive. They are expected to be proficient but are not given the tools or manpower to do the job. It is almost impossible to quantify the social disease that that process engenders. All hon. Members will appreciate that point from experience of their own communities.

On 3 June, I asked the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), some questions and received almost unbelievable replies. He said that in 1985 the London Ambulance Service ran nearly 3·7 million ambulance miles for emergencies and 7·7 million ambulance miles for non-emergency services. I have been told by people who use a wheelchair that ambulances without a tail-lift often arrive to collect them. The projection for 1986 is that emergency miles should remain much the same at 3·8 million but that non-emergency miles should be reduced to 6 million as a direct result of the Rayner study and the Minister's letter. That is a reduction of 1·7 million miles per year, or more than 20 per cent.

The consequences of the reduction in terms of human impact are mind boggling. Is the Minister suggesting that needs have fallen by anything like that amount or that there is that much misuse of the service? Like all other hon. Members, I as a taxpayer am prepared to ensure that, even if there is 10 per cent. misuse of the service, the other 90 per cent. should get the service that they need and on time. Hospital workers can then provide an efficient service. Goodness knows, they are under enough pressure as it is. The Rayner study is an irregular form of administrative study. By Government fiat, originating with the Prime Minister, after one letter from the Minister and one investigation by one assistant administrator in one health authority, we now have chaos and distress affecting a large number of people in London.

The hon. Lady has told us that she is a caring Minister. This is a short notice debate and I am grateful for her presence, but we look to her to give an undertaking to examine this matter. I do not believe that this caring Health Service and its caring Ministers can prove their point until we get back something like the 1·7 million ambulance miles that have been lost to the people of London.

1.58 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I must apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to my hon. Friend the Minister and to the House for not being here when my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) was unexpectedly called to make his Adjournment debate speech. I shall be all the briefer because the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has since raised an important issue and is entitled to an answer before we rise.

The matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East touches on his constituency, mine and others. It concerns the provision of radiotherapy and cancer treatment services for a very large number of our people. I shall not go over the ground again because I have no doubt that it has been covered most adequately. I merely wish to reinforce the plea that I know will have been made against the regional health authority's proposals for the relocation of the first-class long-established and highly reputable cancer services at Southend.

The regional health authority has had three attempts at moving the goal posts to Chelmsford, Runfold and Harold Wood and has not come up with any real solution to the problem. It has not taken into account the terrible distress caused to cancer patients in our constituencies who have to travel considerable distances for treatment two or three times a week. The regional health authority's proposals have caused not only widespread dismay but great anger throughout south-east Essex. It is unbelievable that its proposals do not save money, but will, in fact, cost more.

I have written to my hon. Friend the Minister in detail about the matter and will do so again, but I simply want to state here and now that the NHS exists in order to deal with sick people as efficiently and humanely as resources permit. Instead, the regional health authority has caused immense distress and anxiety. It has taken over a year to arrive at a proposal that satisfied no one. I do not mean just ordinary lay people such as myself and my constituents and cancer sufferers and their relatives; I mean the Essex medical committee and the consultants caring for patients. I hope that my hon. Friend will take this expression of deep dissatisfaction seriously and will take a personal interest in the matter with a view to ensuring that when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State comes to make a decision he is fully informed.

2.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) must be disappointed at the way that the systems of the House operated today so that he could not be present for what I hope, on reading the *Official Report* tomorrow, he will agree was a useful and timely debate. I know that he had made representations to Ministers and the regional health authority and has effectively represented his constituents' worries on this matter, and I am sure that he will continue to do so. I hope that he will take note of what was said this morning and I shall be pleased to hear his further comments. I am grateful to him for supporting his constituents in the way that he has today.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), as he said, has asked questions on the London Ambulance Service and he is not alone in that. For example, questions have been put down by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), and on 18 May 1986 my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) had an

[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and

Adjournment debate on the subject which the hon. Gentleman can find, should he so wish, at columns 956 to 962 of the *Official Report* for that day.

The British ambulance service has been the subject of much scrutiny and change recently, partly, as the hon. Gentleman said, as a result of the Rayner scrutiny, which appeared some years ago. Most recently, the pay structures have been changed and the pattern of working of the service has been altered.

The salary structure agreement for ambulancemen came into effect on 1 March 1986 and it radically changed the pay arrangements for ambulancemen. It provided an opportunity for all ambulance services to rid themselves of inefficient working practices. It was intended that the changes would lead to a more efficient and effective ambulance service more sensitively geared in terms of staff deployment to patients' needs.

The agreement was reached in the ambulance Whitley council and was warmly welcomed at the time by all parties. I have recently had the opportunity to meet some of the members of the trade unions concerned at that time and to thank them for the immense amount of effort that went into negotiating that agreement and its subsequent implementation. All the details are not yet worked out. For example, ambulance officers are still the subject of some discussion. However, my Department would wish me to put on record the fact that we appreciate the enormous effort that went into negotiating that agreement by all concerned, not least by the trade unions.

There was no intention that the level of service provided to the general public should be reduced as a consequence of the agreement. The purpose of the salary structure was to replace a pay system which encouraged inefficient working practice. Both management and the trade unions recognised the importance of reducing overtime to the absolute minimum necessary for operational purposes and the need to eradicate other working practices which frustrated the establishment of a modern, cost-effective, efficient ambulance service.

The inclusive salary will replace the former pay system in which the basic rate of pay was substantially enhanced by additional payments for overtime, shift and weekend working. It also subsumed bonus payments previously paid to many services, but not to the London Ambulance Service. Overtime levels in the London Ambulance Service in the previous year, however, equated to 488 full-time equivalent staff, or about 20,000 hours a week.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in deploring any system which relies so heavily on overtime to pay people a decent wage and which so destroys the opportunity that others may have of joining the service when so much of the service is provided on an overtime basis. He and I share concerns about young people who seek jobs and sometimes cannot find them. I hope that we can be reassured that the ambulance service at least and, indeed, many other parts of the NHS are doing their bit to ensure that we have more names on the payroll while we get the work done as efficiently as possible.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister may well be right and, obviously, we want the service properly staffed, with proper wages and a career structure, but that was not the burden of my remarks. Is the Minister suggesting that the talks or difficulties that she mentioned have in any way influenced the 40 per cent. cut in ambulant cases or the administrative instructions? She will agree that, although they are interesting, they are irrelevant.

Mrs. Currie: On the contrary, they are directly relevant. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear with me as I attempt to put the case as I see it and in such a way that the background can be fully explained.

The basic rate of payment now covers all payments of a standard working week, work round the clock and seven days a week as required. The national agreement also provided local management with the opportunity to review critically working arrangements in a number of areas. For example, the level of accident and emergency cover was to be reviewed to ensure that the level provided matched that indicated by operational need. You will see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in one sentence I have answered the hon. Gentleman's point.

Provision was also made for rotas to be reviewed and, where necessary, changed, using the criterion that operational necessity is the basis for staff being on duty, and operational necessity alone. Out-patient and day-centre arrangements were also to be reviewed and altered to provide optimum vehicle and manpower utilisation. The agreement further provided for a commitment for working practices to be kept under continuing review and for changes to be made where indicated. It also provided for the extended training of ambulance men and women and for them to practise extended skills without further payment.

The basic management principle on which the salary structure was based was carefully worked out with specialist experts. The expectation was that salaried status would lead to major changes in the organisation and delivery of ambulance services and to an improved service for those patients who needed it. However, it was realised that the full benefits of the agreement would take time to materialise, and that the pace of change would be variable across the country and depended critically on the ability of management to secure these changes. It is not surprising that there were teething troubles in some areas and it cannot be denied that there were and perhaps still are particular problems in London.

Prior to the introduction of the salary structure in March, the London Ambulance Service management reviewed its working arrangements and reached local agreement with the staff about the changes necessary to provide the level of service that it considered appropriate.

It decided that there was an immediate need to improve the quality of the emergency ambulance service in London. Changes were therefore introduced on 1 March simultaneously with the introduction of the salaried structure. More resources were diverted into the emergency side of the ambulance service, and these have helped to improve response and activation times, producing a better emergency service for patients. Clearly, that was a worthwhile development, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman can welcome it.

September is the latest date for which I have been able to obtain figures, but I understand that then the nationally recommended response times were met in 90 per cent. of emergency cases in London, as against about 85 per cent. previously. But that is still below the minimum standard of 95 per cent. that is set down nationally.

Consequently, we expect to see further improvement. The improvement in the emergency service had an

immediate impact, however, on the volume of non-emergency ambulance services in London. That occurred because the manpower available to carry out non-emergency duties was temporarily reduced and new staff needed to be recruited and trained. That led to major problems during March and April, and a considerable number of complaints resulted.

Since then, however, the situation has improved considerably. The full benefit of additional staff will not yet have been felt, because of holiday absentees, but during October we hope that the full impact should have become apparent and we are assured that within the next few weeks a large number of staff who are full-time, part-time and training will come on stream. The London Ambulance Service is particularly recruiting part-time staff to cover day hospital work, which will in time release full-time staff to deal with out-patient work. Thus positive measures have been taken to improve the undeniably difficult situation that existed earlier in the year.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the most important thing is to ensure that the ambulance service is being used effectively. It is not a taxi service, or a free bus service. It is quite inappropriate that skilled personnel and expensive equipment should be used in anything but the way in which they were intended.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about ambulant non-emergencies. Surely he agrees that a substantial proportion of ambulant non-emergencies should be able to reach the care that they require without the assistance of the ambulance service, whether they are going to the hospital, day centre, clinic or a GP's surgery. The hon. Gentleman should address himself to that principle.

Mr. Spearing: I did.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can find it in himself to accept the general principle that equipment should be used for the purpose for which it is provided.

He mentioned the mileage being covered. I refer him to a written answer given on 24 July 1986 and to volume No. 102 of the *Official Report*, columns *445* to *446*. The hon. Member for Peckham asked what mileage was covered by ambulances run by the London Ambulance Service in the South-East Thames region in 1985. She also asked for the estimate for 1986. She was told that in 1985 the emergency service mileage amounted to 808,687 miles. The estimated mileage in 1986 was put at 838,000 miles. That is an increase of about 30,000 miles a year. The non-emergency mileage in 1985 was estimated to be 2,029,105. We estimate that the non-emergency service should provide around 1·6 million miles. In other words, there is quite a substantial drop of about 400,000 miles a year. Those figures are for the south-east division of the London Ambulance Service, which follows the south-east Thames boundary but includes Croydon.

Such figures confirm what the hon. Gentleman was saying. But in his reply to the debate on 15 May 1986, which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne, my predecessor said:

"The London Ambulance Service management has reviewed its working arrangements and reached local agreement with the staff about the changes necessary to provide the level of service it considers appropriate. It decided that there was a need to divert more resources to the emergency side of the ambulance service . . . I believe that it will be welcomed by all hon. Members."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 960.]

That is what was intended, and that is what has happened.

In my response on 24 September 1986 to a letter from the hon. Member for Peckham dated 18 July I was able to update the training figures. I told the hon. Lady:

"As you will know, the South West Thames Regional Health Authority (which manages the LAS on behalf of the four Thames regions) acknowledged that problems had arisen on the non-emergency service and began taking positive measures immediately to overcome these difficulties. Their urgent measure to recruit and train additional staff has succeeded in providing over 140 additional ambulance personnel since March for non-emergency work. These people are already operational, and 80 more are now in training."

I am advised that we now have 150 additional full-time staff on non-emergency work with 21 part-timers and about 60 personnel in training.

In my letter to the hon. Member for Peckham I continued:

"The Region has also opened up the recruitment possibilities by seeking up to 300 extra part-time staff to deal with day hospital demand so that full-time staff can be released to carry out important out-patient work. Coupled with this, the Region's actions have allowed more staff to be available for the life-or-death emergency work to ensure that standards are improved in this vital area of the service. I feel that the Regional Health Authority deserves congratulations for the effective and speedy improvements they have made to staffing problems in just a few months."

A report in *The Guardian* of 27 October confirms some of the events. It says that the London Ambulance Service is carrying 30 per cent. fewer non-emergency patients today than it was two years ago. It says that only 27,500 patient journeys per week were being made this year compared with 39,500 in 1984. About 10,500 fewer walking patients were being transported—a reduction of 44 per cent. I am more than happy at that development. We are keen to have a better emergency service. We are determined to ensure that the equipment and resources are not used inappropriately.

The hon. Member for Newham, South said that he would like the LAS to be run by an all-London elected body. I assume that he would have liked the GLC to run the service. Once again Socialist Members are crying over spilt milk, because the GLC has been abolished. However, in its 20 years no attempt was made by any Government to reorganise in that way. The chance was there, but it was not taken. The GLC is no longer there and the ambulance service will not be run as the hon. Gentleman prefers. The hon. Gentleman is at a dead end. I am satisfied that the ambulance service is being run and managed in the interests of patients.

The hon. Gentleman is right to express worries, but it is also right for the Government to ensure that regional health authorities and those managing the ambulance service can guarantee the efficient use of skills and equipment. The ambulance service is part of health care. It is not a taxi or a bus service. It is no more acceptable for an ambulance to be used inappropriately than it is for an operating theatre to be used inappropriately. I am sure that the regional health authority and the London Ambulance Service are taking careful note of the points that have been made, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising them this afternoon.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 3 November 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid.

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House.

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session.

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed).

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session.

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business.

Ordered,

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of Petitions against bill)" were omitted.

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—[*The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

To be communicated to the Lords, and their concurrence desired thereto.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

British Airports Authority

1. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of British Airport Authority staff.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): I have not met representatives of BAA staff.

Mr. Hughes: Does that not show contempt for the people who work in the BAA and have given a lifetime of service to build up the company to what it is now? As the Secretary of State is negotiating to sell the business over their heads, would it not be courteous for him to meet them and discuss their problems and anxieties about the future?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is a fair-minded man, so he will not mind my reminding him that I have not been asked by the staff whether I wish to see them. As the hon. Gentleman probably knows from his knowledge of my Department, no such meeting has ever taken place in the history of the BAA. Beyond that, the letter of 28 July from the chairman of the BAA to the joint staff showed the extent to which there had been full consultation, but if the staff wish to see me on any matters which come within my purview and responsibility I shall, of course, be delighted to see them.

Mr. Steen: When my right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the BAA will he remind him that it is Government policy to ensure competition, which means competition between British Airways and the independent airlines, and that allowing the BAA to indulge in unfair competition or restrictive practices is not Government policy and is frowned upon by Ministers?

Mr. Moore: The main question relates to potential meetings with BAA staff, but I am sure that the chairman of the BAA is fully aware of the Government's attitude and comitment to a policy of competition.

Channel Tunnel

2. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what level of capital investment by British Rail he intends to authorise in respect of the Channel Tunnel.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): We have approved in principle BR investment of up to £390 million at January 1985 prices. Individual elements in the proposals will have to be submitted for detailed Government approval.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree that the tunnel will create valuable opportunities for manufacturers, especially in the north, and exciting new prospects for exporters throughout the country?

Mr. Mitchell: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is about £1,000 million worth of business to be picked up during the construction phase and, on average, 10,000 jobs per year will be created through the term. With reference

to the north, I am glad to say that a famous engineering company in Glasgow already has letters of intent in relation to two tunnel boring machines.

Mr. Stuart Holland: In relation to the level of capital investment that British Rail intends to authorise in respect of the Channel tunnel, will the Minister comment on the report in the latest issue of *New Civil Engineer*, the source of which is British Rail market analyst Ken Gibbs, and which includes comments from Kleinwort, Benson, Mowlem and others, that an entirely new, privately funded and operated rail route from Folkestone to London may be undertaken with a terminus at Victoria? Will he comment on that now, or later, and relate it to the issue of why Waterloo should be the sole flagship terminal for Channel tunnel traffic?

Mr. Mitchell: I know of no authoritative suggestion that there should be a new rail line from the coast to Victoria. British Rail has made it clear why Victoria is not suitable for the length of trains necessary for that service.

Mr. Adley: As a railway enthusiast, does my hon. Friend remember that the South Eastern Railway built a line from Tonbridge to Reading via Redhill a century ago for the purpose of a Channel tunnel and that that line was not included in the Beeching cuts? Is he aware that, sadly, that line is not now included in the major electrification scheme to enable British Rail and the Government to achieve the regional objectives for the tunnel, which are one of the main objects of the exercise? Will my hon. Friend reconsider the arrangements whereby British Rail has been asked to provide plans only for that which is absolutely essential, thus omitting those advantages?

Mr. Mitchell: I understand that British Rail is currently reviewing its initial decision that freight would be hauled from the tunnel by diesel and is now considering electrically powered haulage. That may well affect the line to which my hon. Friend draws attention.

Mr. Gale: I do not wish to draw my hon. Friend on a matter which is the subject of a public inquiry, but will he confirm that in principle the Department welcomes private investment in British Rail?

Mr. Mitchell: It is up to British Rail where it sees opportunities for private investment to help, but at the moment it is not a central part of British Rail policy.

Rail Electrification

3. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what projects of rail electrification are currently awaiting his approval.

Mr. Moore: We have approved five major electrification projects submitted in the last three years. There are no further submissions outstanding. Work on four of the five electrification projects, including Bournemouth to Weymouth and Kings Cross to Edinburgh, is going ahead. The fifth, Tonbridge to Hastings, is already operational.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that quite apart from the benefits that these electrification schemes will bring to industry generally, they will also bring substantial benefits for the spreading of tourism away from London and especially to Dorset?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. When I had the pleasure of opening one such scheme, the local authorities and the mayors of the areas involved were anxious to impress upon us the critical importance of tourism. Electrification will help tourism by improving not just the time but the quality and service of the trains.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Minister aware that there is considerable anger in the west of Scotland at British Rail's proposal, following the electrification of the King's Cross to Edinburgh line, that fast trains from Glasgow should be re-routed through Edinburgh? Is he aware that there is great anxiety that this will cause considerable damage to the passenger routes in the west of Scotland and generally to the line between Glasgow and London? [HON. MEMBERS: "It is just rumour."]

Mr. Moore: As my colleagues have pointed out, it is just rumour, but I will look into the matter, because it was raised the other night. I have heard rather more compliments about electrification than I have heard complaints about the rumours to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Dr. Michael Clark: When granting approval for electrification, is it my right hon. Friend's intention also to approve the installation of automatic open level crossings? If so, will he bear in mind that such crossings have a poorer safety record than conventional crossings and that there is a great deal of resistance to them in both country and urban areas, as shown by petitions from my constituents in South Woodham Ferrers?

Mr. Moore: I am conscious of the petitions and of the point that my hon. Friend has raised. He may recall that this matter is under review. I have appointed Professor Stott to review the whole situation, because it clearly merits serious attention.

Mr. Ron Lewis: Is the Minister aware that the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has caused vibrations as far down as Carlisle and far north west of England? I assure the Minister that there is general dissatisfaction about it all the way from Preston up to Glasgow. Will the Minister look at that issue?

Mr. Moore: I shall certainly look at that issue, but the main question relates specifically to the electrification programme, and I have confirmed that every submission put up by British Rail has been approved and that no submissions are outstanding.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Has the Secretary of State had sight of the Government's report to the EEC, highlighted a week or so ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), in which some very disparaging remarks are made about the infrastructure in Wales? When will we have electrification of our railway lines? Why should Wales always be last in the queue?

Mr. Moore: I must confess that I have not personally read every one of the 17 volumes of the report to which the hon. Member refers, although I have, of course, read everything in relation to my transport responsibilities. The Government's record on electrification is outstanding. It is extraordinary to hear a Member whose party when in government approved only £71 million worth of electrification projects criticising the Government's approval so far of £474 million. That contrast illustrates the absurdity of some of the current debate.

Mr. Steen: Before my right hon. Friend agrees to any more rail electrification projects, will he have regard to the fact that British Rail management refuses to stock British mineral water and insists that every——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is miles wide of rail electrification.

Mr. Pavitt: In view of the changes at the north London line terminal, what are the plans for electrification there?

Mr. Moore: So far, every submission that we have received from British Rail relating to electrification proposals has been approved by the Government.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Secretary of State aware of the great increase in traffic at the stations of Linlithgow, Polmont and Falkirk High and the success of the Edinburgh to Glasgow line in recent months? In those circumstances, is he sure that an added electrification route from Kings Cross to Edinburgh and then on to Glasgow will not damage the successful traffic between Edinburgh and Glasgow? This is very important to my constituents.

Mr. Moore: I always consider the hon. Gentleman's detailed comments carefully. I am not aware of the precise details about increases in traffic, but I shall consider the matter. I do not imagine, however, that what the hon. Gentleman has said denies the high quality investment which most people regard as of great benefit to the east coast line.

Mr. Snape: Will the Secretary of State reconsider the statement that he has just made — that every case for electrification that has been received from British Rail has been approved? Will he consider the Manchester to Blackpool electrification case, which the Minister of State denies having rejected, presumably erroneously? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that line should be electrified on economic grounds and because it would be a satisfactory diversionary line in case of problems on the west coast main line?

Mr. Moore: To be precise, I should have said that there was one application a while back regarding Cambridge. It did not relate to the Blackpool to Manchester connection. There was no application from British Rail in that instance. The application, which was considered las year, was an application by the local authorities. When the application was examined, it was thought that sprinter diesels would provide most of the benefits at a much lower cost to taxpayers and ratepayers. I therefore reaffirm what I said about British Rail applications.

Rail Freight Services (Wales)

8. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of British Rail concerning the organisation of freight services in Wales.

Mr. David Mitchell: No, Sir.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that on 30 October I received a letter from Sir Robert Reid, chairman of British Rail, saying that if the demanding financial objectives set out by the Secretary of State are to be met the Severn tunnel junction will have to close? Will the Minister intervene in this matter, because if rail freight in Wales is to have any future this wonderful facility should be kept, irrespective of the safety and environmental factors involved in the new proposals?

Mr. Mitchell: It has been the policy of Labour and Conservative Administrations that freight should pay its way. There is no relationship whatever between the freight rationalisation in south Wales and my right hon. Friend's recently announced objectives for British Rail. What British Rail is doing in south Wales is designed to enable it to compete successfully with road haulage in a competitive world and to secure a viable business. I assume that the hon. Gentleman wants BR to have a viable freight business in south Wales, so I hope that he will support the action of BR management.

Motorway Service Areas

9. **Mr. John Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria his Department adopts for the provision of motorway service areas.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): The general policy is to provide service areas at intervals of about 30 miles.

Mr. Heddle: I hear what my hon. Friend says. Will he then explain to the House and to the many hundreds of thousands of those who use the M25 why that criterion was not adopted in the design of that orbital route?

Mr. Spicer: The proposal is that there should should be four or five MSAs on the M25. One must recognise, as the Government do, that the tendering, planning, and inquiry processes are very lengthy. We expect South Mimms to be fully operational in the spring of next year, and hope that Thurrock will be available in 1988. The other two — Clackett Lane and Iver — are still subject to inquiry processes.

Mr. Cartwright: Given the sheer volume of traffic using the M25, why have we had to wait for the completion of the motorway before the Government have come forward with proposals for these essential facilities?

Mr. Spicer: That is a reasonable question. In many ways it would be better to begin the tendering process before the motorways are completed, but it is extremely difficult to get tenderers to come forward and get the process started before the motorways are completed.

Mr. Higgins: Does my hon. Friend accept that perhaps different criteria should apply in the case of a road such as the M25 — a circular road — compared with a road that goes in a straight line such as the M1? Given the present level of traffic on the M25 in the rush hour, is there not some danger that if there were motorway service areas people who got off would never get back on again?

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. Friend makes a good first point. I shall not comment on the second point, save to say that we have one MSA almost every 30 miles, but not quite.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that he has been besieged by questions from Tory Members who have not taken on board the Prime Minister's words last week? She said that she wanted no criticism of the M25. What is going off? Only a few days have passed and senior Tory Members are stabbing the Prime Minister in the back. Will the hon. Gentleman assist us?

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was making the perfectly sensible point, which I should have thought would be welcomed on all sides of the House.

that the M25 has been extremely successful in a number of objectives—particularly, for example, in reducing the number of lorries going into the centre of London. But it is always capable of improvement. That is why we have now said that we shall consider the question of four lanes.

Mr. Roger King: Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that when the northern link of the M40 is built from Oxford to Birmingham, the provision of motorway service areas will be catered for during the building programme and not some years after it has been opened?

Mr. Spicer: I have already said that that is a good objective, but when the tendering process is involved it is difficult to get the tenderers interested until they are clear as to the timing of the opening of the motorway concerned.

Mr. Chapman: To help the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), if not my own ministerial prospects, may I say how much my constituents appreciate the completion of the M25? As the whole of the M25 goes through the established green belt of the metropolis, however, may I have my hon. Friend's assurance that not more than four service stations will be built along this length of motorway and that wherever possible and practicable already developed land or derelict land will be used?

Mr. Spicer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his first remarks. I cannot give him any assurance as to the number of motorway service stations, although I have already indicated that only four or five are planned at the moment along the entirety of the route. Therefore, the indications are that the stretch to which my hon. Friend referred will not have so many such stations as he fears.

Airports (Safety)

11. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the relative safety performance of the United Kingdom's airports compared with that of other European countries.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority has the statutory operational responsibility for safety at airports in the United Kingdom. I do not have comparative data about airports elsewhere in Europe.

Mr. Page: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Given that a couple of civilian aircraft have been playing leapfrog in the skies over one of our major airports, has he had talks or meetings with the chairman of the CAA to see what can be done to reassure the public about the safety of our airports and airlines?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, I have discussed this matter with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, who naturally shares my concern about this matter. He has asked me to inform the House that he would welcome meetings with interested Members of Parliament to discuss the details of air traffic control procedures. One risk-bearing air miss is one too many, but it is worth remembering that the air miss to which my hon. Friend referred is the first of its kind over London in the past 10 years, during which period there have been 2½ million movements at Heathrow alone, let alone Gatwick, Luton and Stansted.

Mr. Alfred Morris: When can we expect a further ministerial statement about the lessons that have been learnt from all the inquiries into the traffic accident to the Boeing 737 at Manchester international airport on 22 August 1985?

Mr. Spicer: I am unable to make a definitive statement to the House. All the very detailed investigations that are currently being undertaken have yet to be finalised.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend will know that one of the most important safety aspects at airports is security and the prevention of terrorist threats. Will he comment on how good British airports are in this respect as compared with European airports?

Mr. Spicer: Although it is not strictly a safety matter, security is equally of great importance, and the standard of security at British airports is the highest in the world. Many figures could be used to support that statement. For instance, a bomb has never been placed on an aircraft that has left a British airport, nor has there even been a hijack.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In so far as it has been alleged that an aircraft controller carrying out his duties was actually interrupted during the course of his work and that that may have been a contributory factor to the most recent incident, surely an emergency change in procedure is required. Does the Minister agree that it is not just a matter of the Civil Aviation Authority talking about coming to Parliament and discussing the matter with Members of Parliament, but that rapid action needs to be taken in case there is a similar incident in the future?

Mr. Spicer: The CAA is looking urgently at the proposition that there was some distraction, although it is not clear that distraction was the cause of the incident.

Mr. Dykes: Apart from examining the air miss over Stanmore to which my hon. Friend referred, which is very important, is he aware that we need to examine the rest periods and the hours of work of controllers, a point that has also been raised again? Will he discuss that question with the CAA?

Mr. Spicer: That, equally, will be looked into, but the current rest period at a busy control centre such as Heathrow is half an hour every two hours, so considerable rest periods are already built into the system.

Mr. Park: Does the Minister agree that in principle it would be best to segregate private flights from scheduled flights, bearing in mind, for instance, the number of private aeroplanes using Birmingham airport, while Coventry airport just up the road is not used to anything like its full capacity?

Mr. Spicer: That proposition is well worth considering. In the London system, which is far and away the busiest system, there is already clear segregation. However, I shall look carefully into this question. In the United States the lack of segregation has been a major cause of accidents in the past. Perhaps, therefore, we should consider segregation for all airports.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree with me that there is no reason, on safety grounds, why airlines should not be permitted to make transatlantic flights from Glasgow airport?

Mr. Spicer: I suspect that there are no safety grounds, although I should need to take the advice of the Civil Aviation Authority on that, but there are traffic distribution policy grounds for transatlantic flights being made at the moment only from Prestwick.

Mr. Dalyell: I thank the Minister for his courtesy and obvious concern on telephoning me when I raised with him the case of a constituent who was involved in the incident on the Edinburgh shuttle. Is there any way in which knowledge of these dreadful things—my consituent was terrified—can be made available more quickly?

Mr. Hind: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order at the end of Question Time.

Mr. Spicer: I believe that a wide distribution of knowledge is a good thing. That is one reason why I very much welcome, as a start, what the chaiman of the CAA has said. He would welcome giving hon. Members as full a briefing on these matters as they are interested in receiving. After that, it will, to some extent, be a matter for their judgment how much knowledge is spread. As a matter of Government policy, I believe that we should make available as much information as we reasonably can, without starting scare campaigns.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I commend the air traffic controllers on their excellent work over the years, but is it not the case that the greater the traffic, the greater the risk and that the CAA report says that, in addition to one or two specific incidents, there has been anxiety about the deterioration in air traffic control standards? Therefore, will the hon. Gentleman study the report extremely carefully and present a report to the House to assure everyone that there is no shortage of staff or training and that money is available to increase the number of staff if that should be needed?

Mr. Spicer: It would be worth analysing that matter in greater detail, because we must not have views based on partial leaks. One misunderstanding has arisen out of a partial leak that referred to only a limited amount of data.

I have looked at the figures carefully and if hon. Members examine the numbers at risk in airmiss reports they will see that there has been a decline as traffic has risen from 1982 to 1985. An impression has been given by the limited figures that have been made available, but the converse of that impression is true. That is precisely why I think that we should have the full facts available.

British Rail (Staff Unions)

12. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met trade union representatives of British Rail's staff.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has not yet been approached by representatives of the rail unions for a meeting, although I have met them on a number of occasions.

Mr. Boyes: When the Minister next gets the opportunity to meet the British Rail trade unions, will he explain to them why the Government have found it necessary to make a further 25 per cent. cut in their grant to British Rail? Will he also explain how many more people will lose their jobs as a consequence, bearing in mind that tens of thousands of loyal, devoted and skilled railwaymen have already lost ther jobs? It is all right sitting on the Government Benches making these decisions, but ple are losing their jobs, and travellers, such as myself, use British Rail week in and week out, are finding that e level of service is dropping, not because of the people who work on the lines, but because of the decisions of British Rail and because Ministers are cutting the system and starving it of cash.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman asked about my next meeting with the unions. The former Secretary of State met the unions in December 1983. The NUR was to have met us in July 1985, but cancelled the meeting, saying that it would be in touch to arrange another date. It has not yet done so.

The second part of the hon. Gentleman's question referred to the cut in the public service obligation. Of course, all taxpayers will be pleased with that cut, provided they can get adequate quality standards from British Rail in the delivery of its services. The chairman has accepted the revised targets that have been produced and has assured us that he is able to provide the quality of standard that he has been invited to provide. I ask the hon. Gentleman to stop running down British Rail and to recognise that the staff are doing a damned good job and that in many cases quality standards are rising.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend accept that he should not wait for the trade unions to approach him, but that he should be asking to meet the trade unions and asking why there are such high rates of absenteeism, particularly among transport catering staff? Passengers have to go for hours on end without food or drink on British Rail trains.

Mr. Mitchell: That is a management matter for British Rail and not one in which Ministers should get involved with staff unions. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the problem of vacancies. As unemployment among railwaymen has been mentioned, I should say that there are still unfilled vacancies and British Rail would be glad to have people come forward to fill them.

Mr. Anderson: Before the Minister rushes to criticise absenteeism or other matters, will he take the trouble to look at the scandalously low pay of many people who work on British Rail? He will find that even people who often work unsocial hours have take-home pay of only £70 or £80 a week. Even if the Minister and his colleagues wish to criticise absenteeism or the inability to fill vacancies, will he realise that the 25 per cent. cut will be made at the expense, to some extent, of railwaymen and their standard of living?

Mr. Mitchell: British Rail has managed with a 25 per cent. reduction in its PSO for the past three years and this has not resulted in any reduction in railwaymen's wages. Moreover, the level of their wages in real terms is slightly better than it was when the Labour Government were in office.

Mr. Steen: When the Minister meets the unions, will he ask them to have a word with British Rail management to ascertain why English mineral waters are refused on British Rail, with the consequence that the French have a monopoly on all British Rail rolling stock? Why do the French have such a monopoly, and why are English mineral waters refused on the same wagons?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend makes an interesting but somewhat detailed point about the management of the catering side of British Rail, which I shall draw to the chairman's attention.

Mr. Spearing: Is it not the contention of the unions and of others that any reduction in the real value of rail

subsidies must be met either by reducing the quality of services or increasing fares over the general rise in inflation? Is the Minister suggesting that the reduction can be wholly met from increased efficiency?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Snape: When the Minister next meets the appropriate trade unions, will he discuss with them the impact on fares and services of the Government's latest reduction in financial support for British Rail? Will he accept from me that on Friday afternoon, to take one example, my train to Birmingham was 40 minutes late for a 95-minute journey? Will he also accept that it is no consolation to regular rail travellers to gaze across fields at the permanent traffic jams on the M1?

Mr. Mitchell: I travelled on the first electric train from Huntingdon this morning and it was dead on time on arrival. Moreover, Network SouthEast has set itself a target of 90 per cent. of trains arriving within five minutes of scheduled time and is now beating that target. As for the improvements in efficiency which are required, 8 per cent. in three years is not beyond the wit of most major organisations.

Channel Tunnel

14. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the public expressing concern about any delays in the Channel tunnel construction project.

Mr. Moore: The Channel tunnel project is still on target for construction to start next summer as planned, subject, of course, to parliamentary approval, and very few members of the public have expressed concern about possible delays.

Mr. Dykes: May I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer? In view of the scurrilous disinformation and hostile propaganda against this excellent project last week, will he go further and confirm that there is, as he said, no delay, that the finance is fully secured and that this is an attractive project for investments? Will he confirm also that there is no question of the French having unfair domination, that we are indulging in 50-50 co-operation with our great continental neighbour 20 miles away on a fully friendly basis and that this excellent project will produce thousands of jobs?

Mr. Moore: I do not think that I can pick up all the points in my hon. Friend's supplementary question, but essentially, the success of Eurotunnel in raising funds in the City was a remarkable achievement when we consider that the Bill has not yet completed its passage through Parliament, that the treaty has not been ratified, that the concession agreement is not yet in effect and that competitors have been running a fierce campaign to dissuade investment. That campaign suggests that those behind it share the Government's hopes for this exciting project.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister confirm that the money for the Channel tunnel was secured only at the very last minute by the intervention of the Governor of the Bank of England who started the arm-twisting process by saying to financial institutions, "Will you put up some money, albeit we might not need it for a long time?" Against that background, will the right hon. Gentleman give a categorical assurance, once again, that the Government will not use any taxpayer's money to finance this project at any time?

Mr. Moore: Questions for the Bank of England are a matter for its Governor. I confirm that the Government have no intent, desire, or see any necessity, to provide governmental money for the Channel tunnel project. The hon. Gentleman should address his remarks to his own party, which understands the excitement of the potential developments for British Rail to which hon. Members referred a few moments ago. The project has potential also for the north and all other parts of our great kingdom that might benefit from it.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that he has received no representations from anyone in Southend expressing concern about delays in this project? Is he willing to issue a clear warning to average British investors that if they put their money into the project later this year, they will lose it all if the project is not completed because of funds running out?

Mr. Moore: I would not seek to intervene in any way in the normal market process or seek to give advice to investors as to what they should or should not do with their money. I rely of course—as you would expect, Mr. Speaker—upon my hon. Friend for advice about the views of people in the Southend area.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Westland plc

49. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Attorney-General what representations he has received about the conclusions of the fourth report from the Defence Committee on "Westland plc: the Government's Decision-making," in so far as they relate to his responsibilities.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): I have received three letters from hon. Members in which they asked questions as to the role I played in the inquiry into the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter.

Mr. Dalyell: Is it, or is it not, true, as reported by Mr. John Lewis in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 27 July, that the Attorney-General did any such thing as threaten Sir Robert Armstrong that he would bring in either the Director of Public Prosecutions or the police if there was not an agreement from the Cabinet to have an inquiry into the circumstances in which the Solicitor-General's letter was leaked?

The Attorney-General: I have nothing to add to what has already been said in answer to questions and in statements.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not amazing that the Attorney-General has to threaten the Cabinet Secretary that the police will be called in to No. 10 unless an inquiry is held into public matters? Does the Attorney-General realise that the very fact that he refuses directly to answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), which I am putting to him again, must confirm that the newspaper reports are accurate?

The Attorney-General: My answer in no way confirms the report.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I cannot help but say that I am not sure that the Attorney-General is being as candid with

the House as he might be. Am I right in assuming that the reason why no civil servant is to be prosecuted for leaking the Solicitor-General's letter is that the Attorney-General believes that ultimate blame lies elsewhere? Is he aware that his failure to prosecute civil servants effectively pins the blame on the only possible remaining culprit—the Prime Minister?

The Attorney-General: If I may say so, that is the non sequitor of the day. The only civil servant whom I was concerned with was the information officer. For the reasons that I have explained to the House, it is quite clear that no jury would ever convict her.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the Attorney-General's reply, I give notice that I intend to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Mr. Derry Mainwaring Knight

50. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Attorney-General if he will now state what sum was paid in legal aid to Mr. Derry Mainwaring Knight during the so-called Satan trial; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Nothing was paid to Mr. Knight. Payments made under the legal aid scheme in respect of fees, as assessed by officers of the Crown court, are paid direct to individual fee earners. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to publish these.

Mr. Greenway: As Mr. Mainwaring Knight was convicted of conning hundreds of thousands of pounds out of people, was he required to repay the legal aid paid on his behalf for his defence? If not, should he not have been, in view of the great demand upon legal aid funds?

The Solicitor-General: The sentence imposed upon Mr. Knight, in addition to seven years' imprisonment, included a fine of £50,000 with two years' imprisonment consecutive in default of payment.

Mr. Ashby: What real efforts are made to investigate the means of people such as Mr. Knight to ascertain what money they really have and so recover legal aid fees?

The Solicitor-General: As my hon. Friend knows, there is an investigation into means. The decision whether to grant criminal legal aid has to be made promptly. It is not always possible, of course, to carry out as full an investigation as might be desirable in ideal circumstances. The matter is examined as thoroughly as possible.

"The Sun" (Cartoon)

51. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Attorney-General whether he will make a statement on his decision not to prosecute *The Sun* newspaper regarding a cartoon it published.

The Attorney-General: My decision was taken on the basis of all the relevant circumstances, which included as one—I stress one—of the factors, a mistake in my Department which arose from a misunderstanding between myself and an official and led to the complainants being wrongly informed that I had decided to prosecute. The true position was that I simply wished police inquiries to be made. The House will realise, of course, that I naturally regret this.

Mr. Hughes: What new information or representations had the Attorney-General received between 30 July and 21 August? What was their nature, and what was in them that made the Attorney-General change his mind?

The Attorney-General: Various representations were made from the Arab Society, but I do not know whether they were within those dates. Various people concerned with the matter, including *The Sun*, were wrongly told that there would be a prosecution. When they were interviewed by the police, on advice, they took a course different from the one they would have taken if they had known the true facts.

Mr. Nelson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, whatever the sensitivies of Arab terrorists or pickets outside Wapping, the pig is a much maligned creature?

The Attorney-General: I have always been rather fond of pigs.

Legal Aid

52. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the recent Treasury review of legal aid.

The Solicitor-General: The review team comprised officials from the efficiency unit, the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Treasury. The period of consultation on the recommendations ended on 30 September. The Government are now analysing the responses and an announcement of our decisions will be made as soon as possible. At present this seems likely to be about the turn of the year.

Mr. Brown: This is a good starting point for a debate on legal aid. Will it be possible for Parliament to debate the report in Government time? Inasmuch as the report highlights the large sums of money now being spent through the legal aid scheme, could the Solicitor-General tell us whether there ought to be a Government Minister directly accountable to the House of Commons for that expenditure?

The Solicitor-General: The allocation of Government time is a matter not for me but for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I note the hon. Gentleman's point about direct ministerial accountability. I am not sure that direct accountability would necessarily reduce expenditure from the public purse, but I note the point and will refer it to those concerned.

Mr. Heddle: Without anticipating what the report might say, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there are circumstances in which constituents of all right hon. and hon. Members have problems, particularly the low-paid, those on small incomes and, sometimes, those on retirement pensions, when they wish to appeal against rating assessments, and in order to put forward sensible appeals require professional advice? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that legal aid in certain deserving cases might be worth while?

The Solicitor-General: It is easy to think of types of dispute in which our constituents would like legal aid but do not have it at the moment. The present Lord Chancellor has enlarged the area of legal aid. I cannot hold out any hope to my hon. Friend that further enlargements are an immediate prospect.

BBC (Libel Case)

53. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Attorney-General if has yet made a decision regarding possible proceedings for contempt of court in relation to the publication by some of the media of premature reports concerning an out-of-court settlement in the British Broadcasting Corporation libel case; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Since the conclusion of the proceedings, I have received a letter from the trial judge setting out the aspects of the media coverage which caused him concern. Officials have procured copies of the relevant material, which I have considered with the benefit of advice from Treasury counsel. It is clear that certain factual inquiries need to be made before a final decision is taken as to the institution of proceedings for contempt. Those inquiries are now in hand.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Attorney-General agree that there are many disturbing features about this case and that there is a widespread sense of disquiet, both about the media coverage and about many other aspects of it? Will the Attorney-General examine the circumstances of this case rather more widely? If he does not do so, many people will feel that justice was certainly not done.

The Attorney-General: I am concerned principally with the media coverage, because that is under my responsibility. I must tell the hon. Member that before I received the letter from the judge I had already asked the Director of Public Prosecutions to start an inquiry.

Mr. Ashby: Has my right hon. and learned Friend heard of the new phrase, to "Panorama" somebody? Is it not the case that there was no intimidation of witnesses, but that the BBC had an absolutely hopeless case—that is what the matter is about—and it has been trying to "Panorama" its own settlement?

The Attorney-General: If there really is any evidence of intimidation of witnesses, I just wish that it could be made available. *[Interruption.]* As I said in an answer to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who keeps interrupting me, the only document that he has provided to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis is Mr. Pedley's wretched letter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Attorney-General not recognise that Mr. Christopher Hayward, the Dorset county councillor, was nobbled by an official at Conservative Central Office? Does he not understand that there is a tape in existence which will prove that, that it will surface inevitably, and that when it does we shall look to the right hon. and learned Gentleman to ensure that there are prosecutions?

The Attorney-General: What the hon. Gentleman is doing yet again is using the privilege of the House to make allegations in respect of which he has no evidence of any kind.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Overseas Aid

54. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the figures for United Kingdom expenditure on overseas aid are compiled on the same basis and using the same criteria as the figures for other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): I am satisfied that the figures for Britain's overseas aid reported to the OECD conform to OECD definitions. The relationship between these figures and those for public expenditure on aid is explained in the introduction to the Overseas Development Administration's publication "British Aid Statistics", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Minister recall that in the open letter that was addressed to him by his predecessor, the former Minister said that meetings between himself and the Prime Minister on those matters were few and far between? Will he therefore draw to the attention of the Prime Minister the need not to muddy the waters with regard to the figures by private flows, promissory notes, and so on? Will he distinguish his term of office by aiming unreservedly for the United Nations' target of 0·7 per cent?

Mr. Patten: On the hon. Gentleman's substantive point, I could not add reasonably to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said to him in correspondence that was published on 30 June. I hope that I can help to deliver a quality and effective aid programme over the next few years.

Mr. Forman: I welcome my hon. Friend to his new responsibilities at the Dispatch Box. Does he agree that, whatever may be the finer points of the statistical arguments about assistance to developing countries, the important thing is to increase the beneficial flows, and in that respect the private flows are every bit as valuable, when carefully directed, as public flows?

Mr. Patten: I totally accept what my hon. Friend has said. The position of the Labour party on that issue is somewhat schizophrenic.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Minister agree that on whatever basis those figures are compiled they show a disturbing fall year on year from 1979? I refer to that valedictory letter in the *Daily Telegraph* from his predecessor. Does the hon. Gentleman recall that his predecessor said that the only time that the Prime Minister bothered to speak to him about aid was when she dismissed him? Does the hon. Gentleman expect to meet the Prime Minister more frequently?

Mr. Patten: It would make every day if I saw the Prime Minister regularly. Since 1982-83 our aid programme has been increasing in real terms, and I hope that we can secure the real terms increase in the aid budget.

Mr. Stuart Holland: The Minister will be aware that, according to the OECD, the Development Assistance Committee aid review committee on 18 September was given

"a detailed account of the project appraisal criteria and procedures followed by the United Kingdom."

We understand that that reflected a British initiative. Will the Minister follow that through by making available a copy of that detailed account on project appraisal in the Library of the House?

Mr. Patten: I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman said. I am sure he will also have recognised that the OECD

Development Assistance Committee in September welcomed the high concessionality of our aid programme. It also welcomed the relatively large concentration of aid from this country to the poorest countries, which was better than the average elsewhere.

Gibrepair Ltd.

55. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the new managing director of Gibrepair Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have not met the new managing director of Gibrepair Ltd.

Mr. Colvin: Does my hon. Friend recall that one of the conditions for financial assistance by the Government to Gibrepair Ltd. to assist with the privatisation of the former royal naval dockyard was that a system of proper industrial relations practices, a sort of code of conduct, should be agreed between management and worker? Those of us who visited the dockyard during the summer were disappointed to find that there had been little progress on that front and that that was not the fault of the shop floor. Will my hon. Friend ensure that no further payments are made to Gibrepair Ltd., until the management and unions agree on a proper system of working practices, bearing in mind the extremely competitive market in which Gibrepair is operating?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that that is a matter which should and does concern the Government of Gibraltar as the owners of Gibrepair. My hon. Friend will know that in 1983 we agreed to provide up to £28 million towards the establishment and initial working capital of Gibrepair Ltd., and £26·6 million of that has been spent. We agreed in 1986 to allocate a further £2·4 million as a final contribution to the capital costs of the project. Final in those circumstances means final.

India

56. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what level of aid is proposed to India for the next 12 months.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the current financial year we plan to spend about £108 million on bilateral aid to India and approximately £6 million from the aid and trade provision. We have also told the Government of India that India could expect soft loans or mixed credit for British exports to a value of up to about £300 million over the next five years provided the two Governments identify and agree the desired projects. This would be additional to our normal programme of grant-aid.

Mr. Janner: I welcome the increase in aid to India. However, does the Minister agree that the level of poverty and deprivation in that country are staggering and that we should do everything in our power to help? Can the House have the Minister's assurance that the present unhappy differences on matters of policy between Her Majesty's Government and the Indian Government will not be allowed to interfere in any way with the aid programme?

Mr. Patten: We would like to see ever warmer relations with the Indian Government. India is the largest recipient of our aid on a bilateral basis, because the largest number of people in absolute poverty live there.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Now that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has denounced Her Majesty's Government as racist for requiring visas, as India does, how can the Indian Government bear to accept aid from us?

Mr. Patten: That is a question that might be directed to Mr. Gandhi. We have made our views on visas well known to him.

Deforestation

57. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department takes as part of its aid programme to discourage deforestation.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government fully support conservation of forest resources and their use on a sustainable and renewable basis. They are giving priority to forestry projects within the aid programme, and, with other donors, support the Food and Agriculture Organisation's tropical forestry action plan. I am delighted to add that the Korup rain forest in Cameroon has just been designated a national park. Our project with non-governmental organisations to help conserve this forest will go ahead with the Cameroon authorities.

Mr. Beith: I welcome that answer. However, are all aid-supported projects, including those under the aid and trade provision, evaluated if they are in afforested areas in order to assess whether they will do damage to existing forests? If not, will the Minister ensure that such steps are taken?

Mr. Patten: I am endeavouring to ensure that we give environmental aspects of development aid ever greater priority. I take note of the extremely important point made by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Grist: Does my hon. Friend appreciate the pleasure which it gives me, as someone who has trekked in that forest in the Cameroons, to know that the aid is going to an area which was once ruled by this country, the Anglophone part of the Cameroons? What other African countries are making similar proposals to this Government?

Mr. Patten: We have made progress in other countries with forestry projects, for example in Ghana. We are now spending £5·8 million on forestry projects, which is about an 80 per cent. increase over the past five years, so I hope that many other countries will benefit from that in the future.

Mr. Barnett: The Minister will be aware that this is a major problem, especially in tropical areas. I wonder whether he can tell the House what kind of expenditure goes on afforestation within his tropical scientific unit and how many qualified foresters are working under the technical co-operation programme? The Minister will know as well as I that there are many first-class university departments and research institutes in forestry in this country and that we have a major contribution to make.

Mr. Patten: As I said in reply to the last question, we are spending about £5·8 million on forestry projects and about £500,000 on research. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about the number of foresters.

Turks and Caicos Islands

61. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the level and use of United Kingdom budgetary aid to the administration of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Mr. Chris Patten: A total of £1,460,000 has been approved for the current year. Budgetary aid is provided to cover an overall deficit on the recurrent account. Its purpose is to enable the Government to maintain a minimum reasonable level of public services until means can be found of generating additional sources of revenue.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister remember the substantial capital investment in a controversial airport on the Turks and Caicos Islands associated with an equally controversial Club Mediterranée project, on the advice of the Foreign Office, to eliminate that very deficit? When will the deficit be eliminated? Is the Department responsible, not for development, but for the general grants in aid?

Mr. Patten: I can tell the hon. Gentleman about the impact of tourism, which I think is the main point behind his question. In our judgment, Club Med has had a beneficial effect on the Government's income through increased tourism. The number of visitors has increased substantially. That should help to deal with the budgetary question.

Mr. Hind: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed that Transport questions 4, 6, 17, 18, 26, 28, 33, 43, 44 and 46 deal with the effects of deregulation under the Transport Act 1985. Significantly, with the exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), who asked question 43, every other hon. Member who tabled questions on the same subject was absent. They include five members of the Labour Opposition, one Liberal and one member of the SDP. That means that others interested in the topic were denied the opportunity of asking supplementary questions.

Does this mean that those members of the Opposition who did not bother to turn up are satisfied with my right hon. Friend's wonderful policies and that they illustrated their satisfaction by their absence? Will you, Mr. Speaker, permit me now to ask——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, I will not. I did not think that the hon. Gentleman was rising earlier, otherwise he might have had his chance. There were a number of absentees today. If hon. Members cannot be present for questions they need only let my Office know and their questions will not be called.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When you became Speaker of this House you undertook to protect Back Benchers' rights. I believe that you have done so to a greater extent than any other Speaker since I have been here. In the context of the protection of Back Benchers, is there not a right to get answers from Ministers, not necessarily on judgment or policy, but on fact and personal behaviour? For example, I asked the Attorney-General whether he did or did not threaten Sir Robert Armstrong with the DPP and the constabulary? Are we not entitled to a straight answer—yes or no—either "I did threaten him" or "I did not threaten him", rather than a complete evasion? On matters of personal behaviour by Ministers, however senior, are we not entitled to a yes-no answer to a yes-no factual question?

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he said in the first part of his point of order. All that I can do is to give Back Benchers an opportunity to ask questions. I am not responsible for the answers.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of what you have just said, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) did not get a response from the Attorney-General, will you look into whether it is possible for the Attorney-General to answer questions more frequently? The matter could go before the appropriate Committee. When the Attorney-General came into the Chamber today, he looked ill, and I thought that he did not answer my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow because he did not quite feel up to it, but when the Attorney-General answered other questions, he did so very fully. He spent two or three minutes answering questions on other issues——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already dealt with that matter. I cannot be responsible for the answers that are given. The hon. Gentleman is sitting opposite the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, so perhaps he should put his question to him.

Mr. Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know you accept that the interests of Back Benchers should be protected, but we are in some difficulty, as the Government have assured us that we cannot ask people such as the Cabinet Secretary what happened because, as officials, they are not supposed to answer such questions, and, ultimately, responsibility to inform the House lies with Ministers. But when hon. Members table questions—I am not even talking about unexpected supplementary questions — the legitimate response can only be yes or no. When we ask a serious question, such as whether the law was threatened against the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Office, we cannot obtain an answer. At some stage we shall have to ask you to give us some guidance, Mr. Speaker, on how, in the light of what has been said about Westland, the rights of Back Benchers can be protected against ministerial abuses and the refusal of Ministers to answer our questions.

Mr. Speaker: Opposition Front Bench spokesmen and Back Benchers would not expect me to take responsibility for deciding whether answers to questions are correct. I have no idea whether they are, and that has never been part of the Chair's function.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will agree that Back Benchers should be able to question Ministers. Earlier today I went to the Table Office to ask when I could table a question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and I was notified. I found out that the right hon. Gentleman answers questions very infrequently, and that when he does so it is for five minutes only. The right hon. Gentleman has been making the most outlandish attacks on the BBC. Your would argue, Mr. Speaker, as I would, that if the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster wishes to do that, so be it, but as the right hon. Gentleman has been taking a much higher profile than any of his predecessors, will there be some opportunity, when the new Session begins, to ask the right hon. Gentleman questions more frequently? When he

comes to the Dispatch Box, can it be for more than five minutes at a time? The present situation is entirely unsatisfactory.

Mr. Speaker: I should refine the advice that I gave to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It is not a matter for the Procedure Committee, but, normally for the usual channels to decide on the frequency of questions and the length of time in which they are answered.

Orders of the Day

Housing and Planning Bill

Lords amendments considered.

3.34 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Carthcart): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Amendment No. 4 amends the Tenants Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980. Part I of the Bill relates to the right to buy while the rest of the Bill deals exclusively with provisions affecting England and Wales. Tomorrow we shall be debating Lords amendments to the Housing (Scotland) Bill. The Government have now introduced an important clause that gives Ministers powers to vary upwards only the discounts available in respect of the right to buy, and have thus introduced into a basically English Bill a clause affecting Scotland.

I appreciate that, as things stand, you, Mr. Speaker, do not have the power to tell Ministers not to do that. However, the way in which the Government have misused English legislation to introduce legislation for Scotland is now so great that I would ask you, at the first instance, to see the Leader of the House and representatives from the Opposition to find out whether it is possible to devise strict rules about what is Scottish legislation and what is English legislation.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has more or less answered his own point of order. It is not a matter for me. It would have been open to the hon. Gentleman to put down an amendment to Lords amendment No. 4. The hon. Gentleman has not done so, but if he catches the eye of the Chair he will have an opportunity to make that point during the course of the debate.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office, who is responsible for such matters, is on the Front Bench and will be able to respond to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) should he be fortunate enough to catch your eye during the debate on that amendment.

New Clause

EXCEPTION TO THE RIGHT TO BUY WITH RESPECT TO DWELLING HOUSES FOR PERSONS OF PENSIONABLE AGE

Lords amendment: No. 1, before clause 1 insert the following new clause—

".—In Schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985 (exceptions to the right to buy: certain dwelling-houses for persons of pensionable age), there shall be substituted for paragraph 11—

"11.—(1) The right to buy does not arise if the dwelling-house—

(a) is particularly suitable for occupation by persons of pensionable age, having regard—

(i) to its location, and

(ii) to its size, design, heating system and other major features so far as those have been provided by the landlord, a predecessor of the tenant or a person qualified to succeed the tenant by virtue of Part IV of the Housing Act 1985,

(b) was let to the tenant or a predecessor in title of his for occupation by a person of pensionable age or a physically disabled person (whether the tenant or predecessor or another person).

(2) In determining whether a dwelling is particularly suitable, regard shall be had as to whether the dwelling—

(a) is easily accessible on foot;

(b) is on one level;

(c) being a flat located above ground floor access by lift is available;

(d) has no more than two bedrooms;

(e) has a heating system serving the living room and at least one bedroom.".".

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment (a), in lieu of the Lords amendment, and Lords amendments Nos. 57 and 191.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I was expecting the Minister to say why the Government are asking the House to accept amendment (a) rather than Lords amendment No. 1. There is a difference between the two and I was hoping that the Minister would explain briefly why the Government feel bound to make a minor change in wording but a fundamental change in substance to the Lords amendment.

Mr. Patten: Alas, it is not possible to give a short response. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) wants a response, it will have to be long and detailed because this is a complex issue.

This is an important group of amendments. They affect the rules for excluding non-sheltered housing for the elderly from the right to buy. We discussed that issue at length in 1980 and 1984, as the hon. Gentleman knows. It is a point upon which many local authorities and individuals have strong views and, indeed, their Lordships in another place clearly had strong views on that as well.

This is not the first time that we have had a dispute with another place over the right to buy for elderly people. For all the arguments that we hear on this point, and very persuasive many of them are, some parts of the amendments that were carried in another place smack of discrimination on grounds of age. I never expected to have to accuse their Lordships, of all people, of agism, at least in part, if not in whole.

Under the present rules introduced in 1984, for which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) was responsible when he was the distinguished occupant of the seat of the Minister with responsibility for housing, it is open to landlords to apply to the Secretary of State to have a house or flat exempted from the right to buy if they consider that it is particularly suitable for the elderly and that it was let for occupation either by a pensioner or by a physically disabled person. There have been few difficulties over the letting test, but there have been many more difficulties with the way in which the test of "particular suitability" has been applied.

Against that background, the Lords amendment would make two main changes. First, it would simplify the test of "particular suitability" which has to be satisfied before a house can be exempted from the right to buy. Secondly, it would take away the Secretary of State's jurisdiction in the matter, an important issue, and leave decisions on exemption to the landlords themselves.

[Mr. Patten]

Taking the latter point first in answer to the implicit questions posed by the hon. Member for Perry Barr, the Government cannot accept that decisions on exemption from the right to buy should be left to individual landlords.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Minister just said that the Lords amendment will take responsibility away from the Minister and give it to local authorities. Surely the Lords amendment takes it away from the Minister and gives it to the county courts, which is the case in most other disputes under the right to buy.

Mr. Patten: In the first instance, the Lords amendment gives the responsibility to the local authority. I shall reply in detail to the hon. Gentleman's point.

The suggestion in another place was that that would have the advantage of giving the courts, not the Government as the hon. Gentleman said, the final decision on questions of exemption. That is a puzzling assertion by some of their Lordships and now by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), because decisions taken by the Secretary of State under the present arrangements are in the same way subject to the final jurisdiction of the courts. Therefore, it would be a substitution of the first in line, the local authorities, for the courts, rather than the courts for the Secretary of State. There is no real difference in that respect between what happens now and what the Opposition appear to propose.

3.45 pm

The practical difference is that under the arrangements proposed in the Lords amendment decisions would be taken by one of the parties interested in the outcome. This answers a point alluded to by the hon. Member for Bootle. The council is an interested party in the outcome, just as a prospective purchaser is. It is extremely good to have someone who is disinterested, such as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, taking this important decision.

A reason why we have had problems with this issue since 1980 has been the difficulty of drawing a clear, objective distinction between non-sheltered housing particularly suitable for the elderly and the general run of ground floor accommodation. Even if all authorities could be expected to apply the test impartially — I do not know whether that would be the case — they would apply it differently and the result could be that tenants in one local authority area might find themselves excluded from the right to buy, whereas tenants in a similar property in a different area might find themselves included in the right to buy. That would make nonsense of the law which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne and his predecessor helped to carry through the House. This is the main point of disagreement. In the Government's view, decisions must rest with the Secretary of State.

The other aspect of the Lords amendment is the simplification of the test of suitability. My noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale has made it clear that we are prepared to respond to responsible and constructive criticism on this point. I hope that the hon. Member for Perry Barr and other hon. Members who served on the Committee will recall that we tried to be as responsive as we could to points put in a constructive spirit. Having reflected on some of the problems of the past two years, we agree that some simplification of the test is necessary and we are prepared to see it. The Government amendment accepts the substance of the Lords amendment on this point. In future the suitability of a dwelling for the elderly will be assessed aganst the list of five features set out in subsection (5) of amendment (a).

There are two main respects in which we have made changes to the Opposition's proposal and now I shall answer specifically the question asked by the hon. Member for Bootle. First, we have included a reference to proximity to shops and public transport facilities. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that that is an improvement on the Lords amendment. Hon. Members will agree that that must be considered in assessing a dwelling's suitability for the elderly, although in practice the standard will have different effects in different locations.

Secondly, I propose that there should be power to vary the list of features or to add to it by order. I hope that we have got the list right this time, but we may not have done so. I hope that we shall have the power to vary the list by order in future. However, I give the House an undertaking that there will be consultations with the local authority associations and other interested bodies before any order is made under this provision.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): We are talking about the right to buy of certain people. I brought to the attention of my hon. Friend and his predecessor the problems of people on the Bournville housing estate. On that estate, the land has been partly financed by charity, but all the building has been financed by state and local government funds. A problem arises in that one set of people can buy property and another set of people living as far away as the area of this House cannot even though 95 per cent. of the money has come from local authorities. I have not been able to have this injustice put right. If people are not allowed to buy a house, why cannot they at least have the discount? There is a terrible injustice when one person can buy and another cannot. The other day the other place stopped the Government when they tried to help. Is that justice?

Cannot something be done to help people who feel a real sense of injustice? We all want to be able to encourage people to buy their homes.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. I know how long and hard he has campaigned for his constituents about this matter. He has made his views known to me by letter and at a meeting. We tried to make it possible for his constituents to have the right to buy, like everyone else, but, alas, we were defeated in another place. That defeat was a mistake and we shall have to return to the issue on a future occasion.

I have two final points to make about the Government amendment. It is drafted in such a way as to provide that, where the letting test is met and the Secretary of State is satisfied that all the features are present, he will have to grant an exemption. We accept the Opposition's point that not all tenants' improvements should be disregarded in deciding whether to exempt a property from the right to buy. But the Lords amendment went too far. It would have limited the disregard to features that had been provided by the present tenant. That goes too far in other directions. It could, for instance, mean that where a widow had succeeded to a tenancy on the death of her husband, she could be denied the right to buy because her late husband

paid for the installation of central heating. That would be unfair. The Government amendment requires the Secretary of State to ignore not only features provided by the present tenant, but also those provided by a predecessor in title of that tenant.

I hope that Opposition Members will see this as a reasonable and constructive response to their amendment. In the technicalities, amendments Nos. 57 and 191 were consequential amendments to the main Lords amendment, but they are also necessary as being consequential to the Government amendment.

Mr. Rooker: I am grateful to the Minister. We should not pass this on the nod because the Lords will have to take account of what is said in this debate, given that they previously overturned the Government proposal. I share the distress of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). People locked into the situation that he described on the Bournville trust estate should at least have the right to the portable discount even if they do not have the right to buy because of the charitable housing status. Under present arrangements, those people cannot even get the portable discount. That anomaly should be put right, as it would be if positions in the House were reversed.

I come to this issue relatively new because the earlier debates between the other place and this House took place in 1980 and 1984. The Minister must be aware that this time the Lords have put the amendment into the Bill only because the Government previously operated in bad faith. That is why the Lords are so angry. Both they and Members of this House know that the right to buy has been applied to properties that meet all the criteria for houses for the elderly—houses on one level with no more than two bedrooms, with electrical facilities, wide doorways, and so on. That has been allowed by the Secretary of State. That is what has made the Lords so angry and upset the Association of District Councils and local authorities.

Nobody has put this to me on a crude party political or ideological basis. The Government have simply not operated their own criteria, or at least the Secretary of State has not. In 1984, the criteria were changed and the circular was issued. I pay tribute to the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), in this respect. Exemptions had been allowed, properties had been sold and post-war bungalows designed specifically for the elderly were allowed to be sold for reasons not always given by Ministers.

The Institute of Housing, in the survey organised by Harrogate, gave example after example of properties which met all of the criteria in the circular, in respect of which the Secretary of State was satisfied that the criteria had been met, but for which he still refused exemption. Such examples greatly distress local authorities because of the acute shortage of properties for the elderly. Everybody knows that one of the reasons for introducing the right to buy was to get money. As the Prime Minister put it on 5 November 1974:

"To offer them for sale would still bring a substantial profit to local authorities which they could use to build special units for old people, for which there is a serious need."—[*Official Report*, 5 November 1974; Vol. 880, c. 897.]

There is still a serious shortage, not to mention an increased number of elderly people because of the structure of the population.

Can the Minister say that the Government will operate amendment (a) in good faith and to the letter and that Ministers will grant no more exemptions when the criteria are met? It is important for the Lords to have this put on record and it is central to whether we divide the House on this. The Government have previously been charged with acting dishonourably because they have allowed exemptions when properties meet all of the criteria. If the Government say that they will act honourably—that they will operate amendment (a) to the letter and that there will be no fiddling when a property meets the criteria—I could not in all conscience ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to divide the House. In such circumstances, I would merely say to the other place, "Three times we have had this debate and twice the Government have misled both Houses." It is to the credit of the other place that it has proposed an amendment which forces the Government to put in statute what is in the circular, although there is a change regarding transport. That is an important step forward. The other place would not trust the Government if decisions were made by the Secretary of State rather than by the county court because the Government's track record shows that they cannot be trusted. I cast no aspersions on Ministers, but I ask the Minister to be more specific as this is an important point.

I do not know how local authorities feel about my next question. I tried to put it to one this afternoon, but it could not provide an answer. I see nothing wrong in incorporating into the lease of properties particularly suitable for the elderly, which could be sold, a restriction requiring that they be occupied only by the elderly. That happens in the private sector under leasehold for the elderly schemes, but it does not apply in the public sector, even if properties are especially suitable for the elderly. The restrictions in the private sector are perfectly legitimate and are accepted by those who purchase leasehold, so why cannot the same apply in the public sector? When public sector properties regarded as especially suitable for the elderly come out of the public sector and are occupied by people who are neither elderly nor disabled, people feel that that is not right and that the system is not being operated correctly. I see no problem about imposing restrictions, but I am told that at present local authorities cannot operate in that way because the Secretary of State would say that it was unfair. I offer that point as something for the Minister to consider in the future. In my view, such restrictions would be quite fair, open and above board. The system operates in the private sector and could usefully be applied to the public sector.

The Minister must explain more clearly how he intends to operate Government amendment (a) before my colleagues and I decide whether to divide the House.

4 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I support the motion to disagree with the Lords amendment and I am in favour of the Government amendment. I do not think that it is possible to leave to district and borough councils—in effect, that is what the Lords amendment would mean—the decision as to whether a house or flat ought to be exempt from the right-to-buy provisions on the ground that such a property is particularly suitable for a person of pensionable age. If that decision were left to local authorities, I believe that some of them—alas—are so opposed to the right to buy in any event that capricious decisions would be made. [HON. MEMBERS: "Sheffield."]

[Mr. Ian Gow]

My hon. Friends are quite right. That is an excellent example of capricious local authorities responsible for housing. If the Lords amendment were allowed to stand, I believe that there would also be greatly increased delay in making decisions about elderly people who wanted to exercise the right to buy conferred upon them by this House. There would also be increased litigation, which would mean further protraction of the proceedings. We are therefore right to go back in substance to the provisions of paragraph 11 of schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said that the Government had not acted in good faith in making a designation about houses that are particularly suitable for occupation by pensioners. He also said that, although he was accusing the Government of bad faith, he was not extending that charge to Ministers. From my knowledge of this matter, I can say that all applications made by local authorities for exemption from the right to buy were dealt with by Ministers — *[Interruption.]* I am trying to answer the accusation made by the hon. Member for Perry Barr. He cannot accuse the Government of bad faith without accusing Ministers of bad faith. In that sense I plead guilty to the charge levelled by the hon. Gentleman, because it is not possible to accuse the Government of bad faith without also accusing Ministers.

Every application made by a local authority for exemption from the right to buy on the ground that the house or flat was particularly suitable for occupation by persons of pensionable age was carefully scrutinised by Ministers at the Department of the Environment. Every decision made by Ministers was made purely on the basis of the facts as presented, and in every case the decision was made in good faith. The hon. Member for Perry Barr is wrong to accuse the Government of bad faith without extending that charge to Ministers, and I reject the charge that Ministers have ever acted in bad faith in making such a decision. It is right to leave to the judgment of Minsters which houses should be exempt from the right to buy and it is right to specify, as the Government amendment does, with even greater clarity than is contained in schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985, the criteria that the Minister shall take into account.

We must also get the balance right before denying to people, simply because they are of pensionable age, the right that Parliament has conferred upon others. We are talking about people who are entering the early evening of their lives, about depriving people aged 65 of the right to buy their homes when they might already be regarded as suffering some small disadvantage by being that age, which may some day come to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are talking about imposing on such people the added disadvantage of being denied a right that has been conferred upon others who are younger. We must ensure that we do not penalise people in that way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) referred to tenants of Bournville houses. I think that we and the hon. Member for Perry Barr are at one on this. I hope that the Minister will consider carefully the possibility of extending to such tenants, through the portable discount scheme, the right to buy conferred upon similar tenants.

I hope that the hon. Member for Perry Barr will decide not to divide the House, because I believe that the Government amendment fully meets the situation.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I am very much in the same position as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). The Government amendment is a useful step in the right direction, but I do not think that it goes as far as it might to meet a real problem.

I come to this issue comparatively fresh. What impresses me most about the Lords amendment is the breadth of support behind it. It was supported by the Association of District Councils, which is Conservative controlled, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, which is Labour controlled, the Institute of Housing, the National Housing and Town Planning Council, Age Concern and Shelter. That is a pretty powerful group of organisations facing any Minister who is seeking to find consensus on this issue.

The broad measure of support behind what was done in the other place underlines what has already been articulated by Opposition Members about concern in respect of the practical way in which exemptions were being handled. I make no accusations of bad faith. I simply comment that many matters of very small detail seem to have been introduced when considering an individual case.

The Institute of Housing has provided us with one example — a letter from the Department of the Environment to the housing officer in Birmingham. It asks all sorts of questions about the property, such as the size of the bath, where the grab rail is in relation to the bath, the height of the bath, and whether the bottom of the bath is flat or non-slip. There are all sorts of questions about how the door of the bathroom can or cannot be locked. That introduces a whole range of detailed considerations that were never intended to be the sort of issues on which a judgment should be made in this admittedly difficult area.

That may be one reason why the rate of exemption has been so extraordinarily low—only 16 per cent. in 1985 according to the Haringey survey. I understand that the rate of exemption has increased in recent times to about 36 per cent., but it has been an extremely slow process. I understand the anxiety of Ministers to crawl over all the details and to make sure that justice is being done, but I am not at all sure whether that is the job of Ministers. However, if they do that sort of thing, it will clearly be a slow process.

The Department of the Environment wrote to Birmingham city council on 7 May in reply to a letter from the city council dated 22 February. It had taken a very long time to reply, but at the end of its letter the Department of the Environment had the cheek to say:

"I would be obliged if an early reply could be forwarded."

That shows what happens if this problem has to be considered in such detail.

I welcome what the Minister intends to do. It will end extremely detailed consideration of minor issues. The amendment sets out clear and straightforward criteria upon which judgments can be made as to whether property has been purpose built for the elderly and whether it should therefore be exempted from the right-to-buy arrangements. Unlike the Minister, however, I am less attracted by the proposal to make one of the criteria convenience of location to shops and public transport.

I accept absolutely that in an ideal world shops and public transport are very important to elderly persons. However, we do not live in an ideal world. Local authorities have to build housing for the elderly wherever sites are available. Sometimes, unfortunately, they are not convenient to shops and public transport. I can think of examples in my constituency of purpose-built housing for the elderly which is not convenient to shops or buses. In certain instances, purpose-built housing was convenient to shops and public transport when the local authority erected it, but we all know what is happening to shops.

Mr. Allan Roberts: And we all know what has happened to public transport.

Mr. Cartwright: I shall be dealing with public transport in a moment.

Small shops are being closed. Shopping is being concentrated in the great out-of-town shopping centres and in hypermarkets, which often means that the small corner shop that was conveniently placed for the elderly is no longer there. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) prejudged what I intended to say. We all know that bus services are not expanding and that often they are a casualty of the Government's deregulation policy. Therefore, I am less persuaded than is the Minister that it is reasonable to build in this criterion as a test of the suitability of the housing to be exempted from the right-to-buy provisions.

I accept that a difficult judgment has to be made. Given the tendency of some local authorities — my own included — to undermine the right-to-buy provisions, I understand the Minister's reluctance to give too much power to local authorities. However, this new clause provides a reasonable compromise. The initial decision lies with the local authority, but it can be challenged in the courts, as can any other local authority decision under the right-to-buy arrangements. That is the sensible way to tackle the problem. Therefore, I prefer the Bill as it left the other place.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Minister said that the Government have had problems over this issue since 1980. I have been along for the ride ever since I served on the Standing Committee on the Bill that ultimately became the Housing Act 1980. Having served upon nearly every Standing Committee on housing Bills since then, I have witnessed the Government's difficulties and the way in which subsequent housing Ministers have taken up their portfolios, tried to deal with the difficulty and then have moved on to pastures new.

4.15 pm

The Government are in difficulty over their attempt to enshrine the right to buy in legislation because their claim that the right to buy is popular does not apply to the elderly. Public opinion is certainly not on the Government's side. That is why the other place defeated the Government on this issue. Local authorities and charitable organisations, including Help the Aged, oppose the Government's proposal.

The public believe that the elderly should be able to rent adequate, decent housing and that local authorities should be able to protect their stock of housing for the elderly so that when people reach retirement age and need bungalows or sheltered housing such accommodation can be provided for them, thus enabling local authorities to fulful their duties and responsibilities to the elderly. For that reason, attempts have been made to prevent the Government from selling elderly persons' dwellings and sheltered housing.

Surveys of tenancy preferences show that most people wish to own their homes rather than to rent accommodation, whether from a local authority, a housing association or a private landlord, but that that does not apply to those of retirement age. Tenancy research shows that the majority of elderly people prefer to rent their homes. Indeed, the statistics show that both the young and the elderly prefer to rent their homes. Many elderly people prefer not to have to deal with repairs or to look after a garden, especially if the husband or the wife has died. Therefore, they want to sell their homes and to move into rented accommodation. The Labour party's policy would enable that to happen. In our view, the right to rent is as important as the right to buy. Therefore, public opinion is on the side of the other place and the Lords amendment.

There is also concern about the fact that if dwellings rented by the elderly are sold relatives may be involved in the purchase, especially if the elderly person concerned cannot really afford to purchase the property. Their intention may be to acquire the property for their own use when their elderly relatives die or have to be moved, because of infirmity, into other accommodation.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the spurious view that most elderly people want to sell their houses and move into council accommodation, apart from some anecdotal point that has been made while standing at a public bar, what evidence is there of that kind of nonsense? Although many elderly people want to sell a large property and buy a smaller one, I do not know of one elderly person who wants to swap freedom for becoming a council tenant. Could the hon. Gentleman tell the House where this evidence is to be found?

Mr. Roberts: I did not say that most elderly owner-occupiers want to sell their property and become council tenants. I said that a study of tenancy preferences shows that about 60 per cent. of people of retirement age would prefer to rent rather than be owner-occupiers. That is also true of young people.

Any survey of tenancy preferences shows that the vast majority of the British people want to buy their own homes, but many elderly people wish to sell their homes in order to rent and they make such a request to local authorities. That is not bar gossip; it is direct constituency experience. People come to my advice bureau with such a request. Furthermore, I was chairman of the city of Manchester's housing committee for five years; many people said that they wanted to sell their homes and become local authority tenants. But nobody has suggested or implied that the vast majority of owner-occupiers want to become local authority tenants. Nevertheless, a significant minority want to do so, because of the difficulties associated with running their homes as owner-occupiers, especially if the husband or wife has died and if there are problems over repairs and other matters.

I was mentioning the potential for abuse in the system. Relatives who join elderly tenants in purchasing a property may eventually acquire it for their own use. Our great fear is not that elderly people will buy their homes and live in

[Mr. Roberts]

them as owner-occupiers. As the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said, if that is what it is about, why should they be denied the right to buy?

However, old people's properties are specially built with public money for the purpose of providing accommodation for the elderly, and such properties could in future be occupied by a young person, a married couple or a couple with children. Many local authorities have letting policies that ensure that children do not live next to old people, because that can be a recipe for conflict. There will be problems if more and more of the properties that were built for the elderly become occupied by people who are not elderly while many old folk are left looking for rented housing.

The Government talk glibly about the better use of the housing stock and sometimes present that as the answer to our housing problem, almost suggesting that we do not need to build new houses or increase the supply of houses, but the essential requirement for a better use of the housing stock is special accommodation for the elderly, so that those people can transfer from their three-bedroomed or four-bedroomed council houses.

Elderly people queue up at our advice bureaux asking for specially built bungalows or flats because they cannot manage their big houses. If the local authority has properties available, it can release larger council houses for families on the waiting list or for families with children who are trapped in deck access properties or in high-rise or walk-up flats. In that way, two needs can be met at the same time. The denial of that possibility to local authorities makes public opinion and the other place conscious of the need to safeguard the stock of housing built specially for the elderly.

The proposed test

"reasonably convenient location in relation to shops and public transport"

which the Minister alone will interpret is difficult for us to accept, because of the way in which Ministers have interpreted such tests in the past. I was glad that the hon. Member for Eastbourne owned up to some of the decisions that he had taken. Ministers have agreed for insignificant, seemingly irrelevant, reasons that property could be sold. If the proposed test is applied, the Minister might say that because a bus stop is 100 yds away the location is not "reasonably convenient", whereas it would be if the bus stop were only 90 yds away.

Elderly people should be protected. The Minister accused the other place of discrimination on the ground of age, but I believe that the other place was trying to protect the elderly, especially those who need rented accommodation, those who are under-occupying council houses, those who run into difficulties as owner-occupiers and those whose children have left home or whose spouses have died.

It is not Labour party policy, but I think that we should consider offering rent-free accommodation to elderly people who have lived in council houses all their lives. The owner-occupier who receives Government assistance for 20 or 30 years, in the form of tax relief on his mortgage interest, has mortgage-free occupation after a lifetime of subsidy, and I do not see why elderly people in local authority properties should not benefit in a similar way.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I hope that I am pushing at an open door as I raise again the suggestion that I mentioned earlier, which seemed to have the support of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow).

I thought that it would be right to try to get a pledge today on the transferable discount. There is a problem not only about Bournville housing, but about housing provided by Rowntree, another great charitable family.

Tenants in homes on the excellent estates in Bournville —anyone who knows the area, as the hon. Member for Perry Barr does, knows that it is one of the best housing areas in Birmingham—know that if their houses were built on land owned by the city or the state they are able to buy their homes, but those living in houses built in areas where charitable money met only part of the cost are not allowed to buy their homes—it was the Government's intention that they should be allowed to do so, but some of their Lordships took a different view—but they suffer the great injustice of not being allowed to have the transferable discount that some other people enjoy.

Perhaps only hundreds of people are affected, but surely justice to hundreds is as important as justice to hundreds of thousands. I hope that, after all these years, we shall come to an understanding, which the Opposition seem to support, that those people will be given rights and that we will accept that their situation is not just. If government is not about justice to individuals, what is it about?

I have corresponded with my hon. Friend the Minister, just as I corresponded with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne when he was the Minister. I believe that both of my hon. Friends favoured my proposal, but that their advisers did not. As we have present today a Minister, an ex-Minister and the hon. Member for Perry Barr, who hopes to be a Minister, can we agree that justice should be done to people who properly feel aggrieved?

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I shall be brief, because my view on the sale of council houses and bungalows is well known. I do not agree with the policy. I do not wish to discriminate against old people, but there is a shortage of such accommodation.

My postbag, like that of every other hon. Member, has its share of letters from people who want aged persons' dwellings. Unfortunately, such property is just not available. I can speak only for my own local authority, but in my area every suitable dwelling specifically built for an aged person has been designated as an aged person's dwelling. There were a number of reasons for that, and not least was the fact that designation was a great help in obtaining concessionary television licences for aged people.

There are insufficient aged persons' dwellings to go round. It used to be argued that if council houses were sold the stock was not diminished. That was true, but the letting was lost. An aged person's dwelling is built specifically to help aged persons. If it were passed on to another aged person, there would be some truth in the argument that the housing stock would not be diminished, but nothing in the Bill provides that a property that is sold must be bought by an aged person. When the tenant who has bought the aged person's dwelling dies, the property will be sold on the open market and anyone can buy it, irrespective of his or her age.

My own local authority reserved dwellings for people under 65 so that they could use the last years of their working lives to furnish that property.

Subsection (5)*(a)* of the Government's proposed new clause refers to

"easy access on foot to the dwelling-house".

I hope that the Minister will enlighten us on the Government's thinking behind that provision. What is meant by that phrase? Within the locality which I represent there are old-age pensioners' dwellings that are not easily accessible on foot because of the area in which they have been built. Some of the dwellings are on hillsides and, therefore, they do not meet this criterion. If an elderly person is to reside in one of these dwellings, he or she must be physically fit.

4.30 pm

Paragraph *(d)* refers to "suitable heating arrangements". Heating difficulties have probably been overcome by the installation of central heating systems in most old-age pensioners' dwellings, but some still have only one fireplace on which the heating of the entire house depends. This is a problem that can probably be overcome in a few years' time.

Paragraph *(e)* refers to

"reasonably convenient location in relation to shops and public transport."

I represent a large rural area and many of the dwellings of aged persons are not in a "convenient location" for access to shops and public transport except perhaps the post office. What do the Government mean by a shopping area, for example? Does it mean a number of shops that will supply the needs of aged persons, or part of their needs? How many miles do the Government have in mind that aged persons should have to travel on public transport to reach a shopping area? What should be the frequency of the public transport? There are some places where a bus will be available for such a journey every two or three hours, but next year that service may not be available. If the Government explain their thinking in more detail, many anxieties will be relieved.

Mr. John Patten: It has been said by hon. Members on both sides of the House that the transferable discount is a matter of considerable concern to the individual. Attention has been drawn to this important matter by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) and by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), and it has been reflected in correspondence and meetings. The present transferable discount scheme rejoices in the name HOTCHA, and I can never remember what the initials stand for. Civil servants are always serving up things called HOTCHA. The transferable discount for tenants, which is called HOTCHA, applies only to dwellings excluded from the right to buy which were provided with what is known in the trade as HAG—housing association grant —or other public funding. That was not the position, as I recall—I do not have the papers in front of me—at Bournville, but I am willing to be corrected by my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak. We do not have a scheme which would enable us to look for transferable discounts in these circumstances.

There is much pressure from all sides for transferable discounts to be examined overall. Someone may not wish to purchase the house in which he is residing and may wish to move to another while carrying the transferable discount on his back, as it were. A number of councils of all political colours, for example, Brent — "Minister praises Brent, shock, horror" — and Bromley, are very sensibly considering paying sums to council tenants if they agree to move from public sector dwellings into private sector dwellings so as to free public sector accommodation. I learnt yesterday on "This Week Next Week" that another council, Woodspring — if this was on "This Week Next Week" it must be true — is about to do exactly the same thing. Within Government we must consider the overall effect of transferable discounts on different tenants in different positions. The present scheme that is operating under law cannot deal with circumstances such as those to which my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak refers.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The Minister has said that the HOTCHA scheme — Home Ownership for Tenants of Charitable Housing Associations — applies only to housing which was provided by HAG. He then used the phrase "or other public funding". That qualification is by no means clear. I have had complaints expressed to me by a number of tenants of housing association homes which were provided by public funds — sometimes with the assistance of a local authority subsidy — which, nevertheless, do not qualify for the transferable discount. I have been so advised by tenants of Peabody dwellings and of other housing associations. These matters are not entirely clear because we are dealing with an administrative scheme and not one that is governed by statute. It will be helpful if the Minister explains what areas of housing by public funds or subsidy will be subject to the HOTCHA scheme.

Mr. Patten: In the context of this group of amendments, I cannot help the hon. Gentleman. This is a complex subject and perhaps we should have considered it in Committee. I do not think that it is something that can be handled on the run this evening.

Mr. Rooker: The Bill is available to the Government.

Mr. Patten: Nor could I satisfactorily devise a scheme which could become part of the Bill, which is the suggestion of the hon. Member for Perry Barr made from a sedentary position. I shall write to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) to set out the present position exactly. I shall write also to my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak. The Government must give consideration to these matters, and that is something which we shall do.

I turn to the new criteria which are to be adopted and which were referred to by the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay). They have been referred to as well by the hon. Members for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). Shops and transport will be only two of the criteria. The Secretary of State will be able to grant an exemption if the availability of the criteria is marginal or not wholly satisfactory if he is satisfied on the evidence as a whole, taking into account all the criteria. Applications will not fail automatically merely because dwellings are a long way from shops. In the application of the new criteria, ministerial judgment will come into the matter.

I respond to the swingeing, broad-ranging and hard-hitting allegations of fiddling and lack of trustworthiness which have been aimed at some mysterious and shadowy figures in government, whatever that is, who have interpreted these rules in the past. They have not been aimed at my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) or myself. It is alleged that the interpretation has been against the interests of public sector tenants.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Why not blame the Minister who has responsibility for sports matters?

Mr. Patten: I must defend my hon. Friend from the vicious attack of my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak! My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is devoted to the application of fair and free play, whether in legislation or on the football field.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I withdraw.

Mr. Patten: I am delighted that my hon. Friend has chosen to withdraw such a terrible slur on my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary!

The hon. Member for Perry Barr referred to the important evidence of the Institute of Housing. I hope that I enjoy cordial relations with the institute, which is an interesting group. It provides us with important information, and I very often meet its members at conferences. Those who attend the conferences often barrack me, but always in a cheerful way. They have never done so in a nasty or malicious way, perhaps with the exception of one lady who I have always believed to be a member of the institute. She sits below me at meetings and shouts things such as, "Pompous Tory twit". I do not like that sort of thing. I did not come into politics to be described as a pompous Tory twit. The comment that this lady shouted that hurt, and deeply, was "Fat, pompous Tory twit". My tailor in Oxford, Mr. Stamp, labours long and hard to conceal that sort of thing, and he, too, was deeply hurt by the lady's accusation. The thing that really worries me about her is that when she comes to meetings and barracks me she is always knitting. That makes me feel extremely uneasy. There is the sound of the tumbrils coming to get me, and the tricoteuse.

I shall deal with the detail of the Institute of Housing rather than the eccentricities of its members. It stated in evidence that it published in January 1986 that a substantial number of applications were being turned down by Ministers. It said that only 16 per cent. of applications from authorities were successful. For once, the institute was wrong. At the very time that it reported, we were accepting claims from local authorities at a level of about 34 per cent. The House may like to have confirmation from me that the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) was correct — the current success rate for local authorities is standing at a little under 36 per cent.

I take what the hon. Member for Woolwich has said very seriously. Of course, we will operate the rules fairly, as we always seek to do. Certainly I always seek to do that. I hope that the hon. Member for Perry Barr will realise that, under the Government's amendment, the Secretary of State would have no choice but to grant an exemption if satisfied that the listed features were present and that the letting test was fulfilled. I hope that that is a safeguard against the sort of things which the hon. Member for Perry Barr has unfairly suggested have happened in the past.

Mr. Rooker: On the Minister's point about portable discounts, if my memory serves me correctly, the Opposition tabled a new amendment during Committee related to portable discounts, but, in the wisdom of the Chair, it was not deemed selectable within the terms of the Bill. Therefore, we are not late in coming forward with our proposal. It might not go down very well with people outside, but we think that it is important to the interests of the people concerned. That is why it should be on the agenda. I welcome the fact that the Minister has said that he will look into the matter.

I accept the point that, for practical purposes, the tenants described by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and others are, in effect, private sector tenants. Their rights are somewhat different, but there is an injustice which must be corrected. I also accept what the Minister said, in a round about way, about some local authorities being unreasonable. I do not deny that. Some local authorities, given wide discretion, would be wholly unreasonable. There is no doubt in my mind about that. But if they are unreasonable they can be hauled before the courts. That is important. I do not wish to encourage people to put money into the hands of the legal profession, but there is an avenue for redress. It would be a problem if every ground floor accommodation in the land was alleged to be wholly, exclusively and particularly suitable for the elderly. That would be a gross travesty of the truth. No one could make that case. To do so would be unreasonable. We must consider the other side of the question, but the Minister seems to want it all his own way, as the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) observed.

I do not wish to personalise this, but if I do not do so I am accused of not naming the Minister. I do not want to do that because I do not know who makes the decision. There is more than one Minister in the Department. The charge was levied against the way in which the Government operated the 1980 and the 1984 rules. There is plenty of evidence about that. In the past, elderly persons' dwellings that met all the criteria listed were still allowed by Ministers to be sold, so there must be something wrong. What is more, Ministers would not give reasons for those decisions. That has already happened. The evidence exists and it cannot be denied. We are asking for a cast iron, copper-bottomed guarantee that it will not happen again, that reasons will be given and that Ministers will be accountable. The only way in which we will ever achieve that is if we stick with the Lords amendment. I have grave doubts as to how the other place operates, although I do not seek to rubbish it. It is the other House of Parliament, albeit unelected, and we must listen to what it says.

We must support the amendment because of the way in which the system has operated in the past and the way in which the Minister has slipped in the other changes, especially in relation to transport. The Minister has not been as detailed about those points as we should have liked. Essentially, the charges are a transport policy matter and should not be a housing matter, but with the cuts in transport many rural areas can never fulfil the transport criteria as they have lost bus services and other transport.

4.45 pm

These matters must be looked at in the round, and we should give the Lords another opportunity to examine them. We should agree to the Lords amendment and allow the matter to be re-examined. Over the years, the Lords have spent more time considering this matter than we have. I do not wish to imply that they are wiser than we are, but they have pushed the Government a long way and that is to their credit. I also give credit to the Government, who have responded in a much more detailed way than

previously. However, as the Government could not accept more of the spirit of the Lords amendment, the Opposition will vote in favour of the Lords amendment.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 185, Noes 117.

Division No. 304] **[4.46 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Critchley, Julian
Dorrell, Stephen
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*

Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*	Williams, Rt Hon A.
Snape, Peter	Winnick, David
Soley, Clive	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Spearing, Nigel	
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*	Mr. Ray Powell and
Wainwright, R.	Mr. Mark Fisher.
Welsh, Michael	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 1 disagreed to.

Amendment made to the Bill in lieu thereof:

New clause

EXCEPTION TO THE RIGHT TO BUY IN CASE OF CERTAIN DWELLING-HOUSES FOR PERSONS OF PENSIONABLE AGE.

Before Clause 1 insert the following new clause—

'.—(1) In Schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985 (exceptions to the right to buy), for paragraph 11 (certain dwelling-houses for persons of pensionable age) substitute—

"11.—(1) The right to buy does not arise if the Secretary of State has determined on the application of the landlord, that it is not to be capable of being exercised with respect to the dwelling-house.

(2) The Secretary of State shall so determine if, and only if, he is satisfied that the dwelling-house—

(a) is particularly suitable, having regard to its location, size, design, heating system and other features, for occupation by persons of pensionable age, and

(b) was let to the tenant or a predecessor in title of his for occupation by a person of pensionable age or a physically disabled person (whether the tenant or predecessor or another person).

(3) The Secretary of State shall for the purposes of this paragraph disregard the presence of any feature provided by the tenant or a predecessor in title of his.

(4) A dwelling-house which the Secretary of State is satisfied has the following features, shall, subject to sub-paragraph (3), be taken for the purposes of this paragraph to be particlarly suitable for occupation by persons of pensionable age.

(5) Those features are—

(a) easy access on foot to the dwelling-house, including in the case of a flat above or below ground-floor level access by lift to the level of the dwelling-house;

(b) accommodation on one level;

(c) no more than two bedrooms;

(d) suitable heating arrangements for at least the living room and one bedroom;

(e) reasonably convenient location in relation to shops and public transport.

(6) The Secretary of State may by order vary the list of features in sub-paragraph (5) by adding or deleting features or amending the description of any listed feature; and an order may contain such transitional provision as appears to the Secretary of State to be appropriate.

(7) An order shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(8) An application for a determination under this paragraph shall be made within the period for service of the landlord's notice under section 124 (notice admitting or denying right to buy).".

(2) The above amendment applies to any decision made by the Secretary of State after the commencement of this section, notwithstanding that the tenant's notice claiming the right to buy was served, or the application for a determination was made, before commencement.'.—[*Mr. John Patten.*]

Clause 1

DISCOUNT ON RIGHT TO BUY AND SIMILAR SALES

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 2, line 1, after "is" insert

", (subject to any order under subsection (2A))".

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 4 and the amendments thereto.

Mr. Patten: Amendments Nos. 2 and 3 provide for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to have power to provide by order for higher discounts to be available to tenants exercising the right to buy. This is an important provision. Currently, as the House is all too well aware, a tenant of two years' standing qualifies to buy at a discount rate of 32 per cent., but if the tenant has more than the basic two years he or she qualifies for extra discount, in steps of 1 per cent. for each additional year, up to a maximum of 60 per cent. overall. Clause 1, of course, provides for the discount scale for flats to run from a minimum of 44 per cent. by 2 per cent. steps to 70 per cent. The proposed power will enable the minimum and maximum discount and the size of the steps to be increased by order.

Amendment No. 4 makes parallel provision for Scotland. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram)—who is responsible for housing in Scotland is on the Front Bench. The reason for making this amendment in the Housing and Planning Bill rather than the Housing (Scotland) Bill is timing. When the amendments were tabled in another place, it was too late to add new matter to the Scottish measure.

Mr. Maxton: Feeble.

Mr. Patten: I never give feeble excuses; my explanations are always telling and to the point. I draw the attention of the House to the important safeguards in the amendments. There is an important safeguard, and the House should reflect on it. The power to make orders is to be exercisable only with the consent of the Treasury, and orders are to require affirmative resolutions of both Houses of Parliament. So any orders which may be made will be subject not only to the due financial scrutiny of our friends in Great George street, but, and much more importantly from the point of view of Opposition Members, to that of Parliament. The reason for seeking that power is that it seems sensible at this stage to have flexibility to adjust the right-to-buy discount scales further in the light of experience.

5 pm

This is the third time that Parliament has legislated on this subject: the Housing Act 1980 provided for a maximum discount of 10 per cent., the Housing and Building Control Act 1984, which was brought to the House by the then Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), raised it to 60 per cent., and now we are providing for higher discounts for flats. We were pressed in Committee to go even further. It would not be surprising if, at some point, it seemed right to change the discount scales again. If that were so, it would be a pity if the pressures of the legislative programme held it up.

That is why we propose a power to make changes by order, subject, as I have said to parliamentary scrutiny through the affirmative resolution procedure.

We do not propose to make any changes at the moment. It would be misleading if I were to volunteer suggestions as to the sort of changes that might seem right at some future date. At the same time, it would be short-sighted of the Government, and certainly of me, if we did not open our minds to the possibility of future changes in right-to-buy discounts.

The public housing sector is very different from what it was in 1980. It is only to be expected that in two, four or six years the problems and opportunities could look very different again. That is why it seems sensible from the administrative point of view to provide that future changes could be made without the need for main legislation.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to look closely at the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). They are interesting amendments and tell us much about Liberal party thoughts on housing. The amendments would enable orders to be made reducing discounts below the levels for which the statute provides. It seems that that is what the Liberal party is up to, and it is surely not right. The right to buy—I am not speaking from a partisan position—is firmly established, and it is reasonable for tenants thinking about buying their homes in the future to make plans on the assumption that the option of exercising the right to buy will not be taken away or made less attractive at some future date. To argue by analogy, people entering into an agreement to buy their homes under mortgage conditions would want to know what mortgage interest tax relief would be available in the future.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I should like to know what my hon. Friend has to say about that.

Mr. Squire: I assure my hon. Friend the Minister that a large number of would-be purchasers in Havering in the early 1970s lost out when the council changed control and bitterly resented the action of the then Labour council in that respect.

Mr. Patten: That was with the Labour council in Havering then; now the Liberal party nationally seems to want to sow uncertainty in the minds of council tenants.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I should not like my hon. Friend to think that it was only the Labour party and the Liberal party. The SDP parliamentary candidate for my constituency has come out against council house sales.

Mr. Patten: Exactly. It seems to be——

Mr. Ross (Isle of Wight) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: May I please answer the first question? I do not want to get to the stage of intervening in my own answers, as it confuses me, and it certainly confuses the House.

We see that all parties, except the Conservative party, express doubt, both nationally and locally, on the right to buy, and the future of the right to buy.

Mr. Ross: Although the Minister was not in his present position then, roofing grants for houses built before 1919 were a marvellous give-away for about a year. There are now waiting lists of hundreds. That is what Conservative policy has done to housing and roofing grants.

Mr. Patten: I must restrict myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I would not wish to be ruled out of order by you. I must not go down the seductive road of discussing roofing grants as the hon. Gentleman suggests, because we are discussing the right to buy and the Liberal amendments.

The amendments would create uncertainty if tenants could not assume that discounts would be at least as favourable in the future as they are now. There is already enough uncertainty in tenants' minds because of the clear qualifications of the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party on the right to buy. They both have qualifications and, incidentally, they do not speak with one voice on that issue. Neither the Liberal party nor the SDP supports the right to buy wholeheartedly and without qualifications. They are sowing seeds of doubt in the minds of tenants of council flats and council houses, just as their new, emerging views on mortgage interest tax relief are sowing uncertainty in the minds of home owners and prospective home owners.

Any future Government would be perfectly free to bring forward legislation to dismantle the right-to-buy scheme, or to reduce the discounts available. If that is what the Liberal party has in mind, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey might like to take the opportunity today to put his party's intention on the record and tell us the contents of its secret manifesto on the right to buy. If the intention of Opposition Members is to reduce discounts available to tenants, surely that ought to be the subject of main legislation. I invite the House to reject the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 4 on those grounds.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Minister is trying the trick that he tried yesterday in a different forum, which gave him the opportunity to try to expose differences in Opposition parties on matters of principle that are very important outside the House. Yesterday, it was mortgage interest tax relief. I shall return to that later. I shall deal first with the amendments in the round before, quite properly, answering the questions that the Minister raised. I make it clear that there is not only agreement between the party of the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) — the Social Democratic party—and my own, but that agreement will allay fears and, indeed, encourage people to trust our views on these matters rather than those of the Minister and his colleagues.

The issue here is the old and familiar constitutional question of which matters come into primary legislation and which into secondary legislation. The starting point is whether it is appropriate that the raising and lowering of discount levels, which would affect tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of people, should go through the House by way of an order with a short debate probably lasting a maximum of one and a half hours and probably late in the evening. On the constitutional principle, it seems appropriate that matters of significant importance to people contemplating buying or local authorities contemplating having to sell their housing should be the subject of primary rather than secondary legislation. The

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Lords amendments apply to England and Wales and also to Scotland, and provide that several matters will be subject to the secondary legislation procedure: first, whether the discount should be raised; secondly, the percentage by which the increase over the time scale provided in the legislation is arranged; thirdly, whether there can be different provisions in different cases. There is also a grey area that the Minister wishes to include in the subsidiary legislation, which is described as

"incidental, supplementary or transitional provisions".

That may be a something or a nothing.

The most recent experience that we have had of such secondary legislation, dealing with many authorities in Britain or classes of them, on individual matters connected with financing and where extreme problems have been caused for those authorities and for the House, was in the context of the Rates Act. Under that Act, rate capping was permitted by the Government. The Government now bring forward an order, in which they list the authorities that they intend to rate-cap. In one debate all the finances of all the authorities—some of the largest city, borough or district authorities in Britain — come under the scrutiny of the House. The House will recall that there have been regular complaints that this mechanism for addressing the severe and important questions of the financing of local government does not provide a suitable opportunity or adequate time for sufficiently detailed debate. The underlying question is whether it is appropriate to debate such matters on the Floor of the House rather than in Committee or, more importantly, locally in the areas of those authorities. Experience of the rate-capping legislation has shown the procedures to be profoundly unsatisfactory.

I come to whether my amendment on the English provision and the similar amendment to Lords amendment No. 4 on the Scottish provision provide an acceptable alternative to the Lords amendment. The first question is whether the procedure should be carried out in the House by secondary or primary legislation. My view is that it should be primary legislation because of the number of people affected and the value of the matters under consideration. If that is not to be so, however, my amendment seeks to explore whether the Government accept that it is appropriate that they should be able to vary the provisions in either direction if they think that that is suitable. It is up to the Government of the day to decide the parameters within which the right to buy operates. That has been the decision that the Government determined when they legislated in 1980 creating an entitlement to buy for council tenants. That has come to be accepted increasingly across the country, and it seems unfair and lacking in even-handedness if the Government can always and only increase discounts but never reduce them.

The Minister asked for our view and I shall give it to him. It is clear that there has been some unhappiness over the years. As the Minister knows, we have recently spent some time making sure that we have a clear and correct position to put to the country. The alliance is now agreed that the right to buy will remain and that Parliament should set the limits within which it operates, but we should like increased local discretion over exemptions and discounts.

The reason for that, as the Minister should know well, is different areas, which may be Liberal, Social Democratic party, alliance, Labour or Tory controlled, have different circumstances. The Minister, with the Labour housing spokesman, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), and myself yesterday watched a film on the now twice quoted "This Week Next Week" programme, from Woodspring district council in Somerset—[HON. MEMBERS: "Avon."] I beg the pardon of the House. It is in Avon. The Conservative chairman of Woodspring council housing committee expressed to the watching world dissatisfaction with the way in which the right-to-buy system was operating because it was applying unfairly to the council in determining its housing priorities.

I hope that the Minister, as a Minister in the Department of the Environment, which is responsible for local government, will accept from his national knowledge and his local experience in Oxford that one cannot say that the same circumstances apply all over the country. There have been debates in the House on portable discounts for estates such as the Bournville estate in Birmingham, the Peabody estates in London or the Dulwich College estate in Southwark. There are different local circumstances in each case. I ask the Minister to agree that it is appropriate, whether in Labour-controlled Southwark, Conservative-controlled Woodspring or alliance-controlled Sutton, that within limits fixed by the House local authorities should be able to make certain decisions, because those decisions should depend on the pressures on the various elements in the housing stock — old people's housing, sheltered housing, and so on—at any given time.

5.15 pm

The Minister referred to uncertainty about another matter, but there is no uncertainty there. As he knows, yesterday I made it clear to him publicly that the alliance is committed to sustaining a regime under which people buying their homes on a mortgage will get tax relief which they can set against the cost of the mortgage. It is mischievous of the hon. Gentleman to pretend that he does not know that and did not hear that yesterday. He knows that the alliance, like the Conservative party and all other parties, is committed to the retention of that form of interest relief.

Mr. John Patten: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I did not intervene in the Minister's speech. He heard the argument yesterday and it is important that he should not misrepresent it when the subject is raised in a debate in the House the very next day.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: The debate is about whether the Government think that in the light of the Rates Act——

Mr. Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: —and other experiences there should or should not be a summary procedure for determining important matters connected with housing supply. From the Liberal Bench, I ask the Minister to consider whether it would be better not to have a summary procedure and to keep changes to primary legislation. That is what we should like most. But if the Minister is allowing a summary procedure, he should put within it a range of options available to himself and his successors.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Sadly, everything that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has said will confirm the fear of council tenants around the country that, by foolishly voting for the Liberal or Social Democratic party, they will lessen their chances of purchasing their council house. It is naive in the extreme to suggest that one can have local variations so that in one council area there is a discount of 60 per cent. while someone's twin brother living in another area has a different discount right. That is deeply unfair. I know that the Liberals and the Social Democratic party do not believe very much in fairness and equity, but I thought that the hon. Gentleman would have noticed that one.

I return to more important matters because it is most unlikely that most local authorities will have the opportunity to choose discount rates. I refer to a matter that concerns many of my constituents greatly. Unfortunately, in many respects, the price of housing in the Thames valley and my constituency has risen dramatically in recent years. Many of my council house tenants who are eligible for 40, 50 or 60 per cent. discounts on the purchase of their council house find that they do not receive their maximum discount because when the Housing Act 1980 was passed a maximum of £25,000 was put into the Act as the discount that was allowable notwithstanding the percentage. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to review that in any order that he introduces because many people are being penalised unfairly. It might be thought that, if the house was worth so much money that one could get a discount above £25,000, one could probably afford the house anyway——

Mr. Rooker *indicated assent.*

Mr. MacKay: I see the hon. Gentleman nodding. The majority of people eligible for those large discounts are fairly senior members of the community who are in their 50s or early 60s and their chances of getting a substantial mortgage, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) realises, are slim. Therefore, it has made the difference, in a number of cases in my constituency, between buying or not buying a council house. Without getting the full 60 per cent. discount, because of the £25,000 limit, they have had to withdraw from purchasing because they cannot obtain mortgage facilities on the number of years they have left before reaching retirement age.

It is to be hoped that very shortly we shall obtain the Royal Assent to this Bill. It is desperately important for the Department of the Environment to make it clear to all local authorities how quickly they can proceed to sell at the new discount rates and how quickly buyers can sell without having to repay the discount. Some of my constituents have exchanged contracts and are waiting to complete the sale of their council houses. They are waiting to confirm that the five years is reduced to three. There are long chains involved. At the moment Bracknell district council and the royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead will not be able to say when those people can complete, even after Royal Assent. Therefore, I hope that clear guidelines are sent out to all local authorities quickly.

Mr. John Fraser: I listened to the Minister moving this amendment. He displayed all the qualities of the Tory party in relation to housing. He did not speak with the words of the builder, the developer, or the provider of housing but only with the philosophy of the Tory estate agent out to sell public assets and take his own political commission. That sums up Tory policy towards homes. They want to reduce the numbers being built and they are making no effort to meet the massive housing need in this country. The emphasis is on the sale rather than the provision of housing.

Our principal objection to this amendment is that it deprives the House of the ability to talk about council housing or local authority housing association housing in the round. It denies the House the ability to look at the problems and opportunities of the right to buy in a much more rounded context. The amendment enables the Government not to vary the level of discount, but to increase it and assist in the sale of public assets — in some circumstances that is desirable—without considering all the other aspects of the matter. We oppose the Lords amendment because we believe that this is a matter that should be dealt with by primary legislation, so that there is an opportunity to discuss other issues.

This is not a debate about the right to buy. The Labour party has made it clear that we do not intend to repeal the principle of the right to buy, although we shall make some changes. One of the principal changes will be to ensure that much of the £6,000 million that has been derived from the sale of council houses and flats will be used to build replacement houses and flats.

One of the attractive features of the right to buy when the Tory party first announced it was that it was said that it would release homes that, people wanted to own for themselves—there is nothing capitalist or socialist about owning one's own home—and that it would also release money to provide other homes. To that degree, the proposition is one which can be fully supported. However, as soon as the sale of council houses had taken off, the Treasury intervened—the Treasury is mentioned in the amendment—to ensure that that money was not to be used for the replacement of stock. A Labour Government would ensure that, although the right to buy would continue, all money derived from the sale of homes would be used to provide more homes, which are so badly needed. We want an opportunity to put that proposition in primary legislation before the House. The Labour party will ensure that when homes are sold in areas where there is housing need a local authority—without any damage or injury to people who have bought their own home—will have a pre-purchase option to take the home back into its stock of homes to let. That does no harm to the purchaser. Indeed, it may help purchasers because they will not have to pay an estate agent's commission and will save some money.

There are some parts of the country where the shortage of homes to rent is so enormously acute — I have mentioned central London—that it would be irresponsible to continue with the sale of homes. In those circumstances we should compensate the tenants by giving them a transferable discount to move elsewhere. There is no doubt that there are some parts of the metropolis where the shortage of land and homes to rent is so acute and severe that it is irresponsible for the Government to be concentrating a large part of their housing association expenditure through the Housing Corporation on stress area investment and homes to rent in central London. I agree with the proposition that they should do that, but it is irresponsible to be pushing money into that sort of exercise and at the same time stripping out the same kind

[Mr. John Fraser6]

of homes which are provided by local authorities. Therefore, although we shall keep the right to buy, we shall certainly want to make some changes to which no sensible person would object.

Our objection to this amendment is that it enables the Government to increase the discount without any other debate. The House would be restricted to about 90 minutes of debate, usually after 10 o'clock, on what could be a transfer of public assets involving many millions of pounds, without any guarantee that the money derived from that sale will be put back into housing. We believe that the housing crisis in this country demands more than a single-issue debate which takes place in 90 minutes. We are suspicious of the Government taking a power that may be used to give an extremely expensive bribe to the electorate shortly before an election. We demand to be able to debate not just the sale of council housing but the distribution and social effects. We want to debate the use of the proceeds and we challenge the ease with which the Government might make a crude and irresponsible bribe by giving away what amounts to another person's assets in order to achieve some electoral advantage. For those reasons we shall vote against the amendment introduced in the other place.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): This debate will be remembered because of the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) who purported to speak on behalf of what is known as the alliance. While he was addressing the House, the official spokesman on housing for the Social Democratic party was seated only a few feet from him. You will have heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey move his amendment which would give my hon. Friend the Minister the power to vary by order the rates of discount downwards. The hon. Gentleman went on to say that it was the policy of the Liberal party and the alliance that there should be different rates of discount and variations in the right to buy according to which local authority a tenant happens to live in. In effect, he was saying that if the Liberals have their way there would be diminished opportunities for discount and the right to buy affecting some people according to the accident of the borough or district in which they happen to live.

I was watching the face of the housing spokesman for the Social Democratic party very closely as he listened to the exposition of his hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. When the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) seeks to give his own gloss or interpretaton or, if he is a man of courage, his own repudiation of the exposition of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, I hope that he will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A revelation has been made, not only to the House of Commons, but to those who listen carefully to what goes on here about the right to buy. The revelation is from the Liberal party and it has never before been spelt out so clearly. We have heard that the Liberal party is in the business of restricting not only the right to buy — because that would depend, in the Liberal spokesman's view, upon where one lives—but the right to discount.

5.30 pm

That astonishing speech, which I cannot believe has been approved either by the doctor or by the leader of the Liberal party, will be repudiated by both. My advice to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is that when he is about to make a new policy statement on behalf of his party he would be wise to have it cleared by both those gentlemen.

Mr. John Patten: That also applies to helicopters.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend must not lead me astray about helicopters. That was when the Liberal leader was summoned by the leader of the party of which the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) is a distinguished adornment from my constituency so that a meeting could be held at the House of Commons.

I agree strongly that the House should agree with the Lords in the amendment. The Housing Act 1980 set a three-year qualification period before a tenant could exercise the right to buy. The maximum discount was 33 per cent. after three years' tenancy and up to 50 per cent. after 20 years' tenancy. The Housing and Building Control Act 1984 diminished the qualification period from three years to two years and increased the maximum discount to 60 per cent. We are now talking about the third change that we have made in the discount level. We are moving from 44 per cent. to 70 per cent. in respect of discounts for flats.

I seek clarification from the Minister. Am I right in thinking that my hon. Friend is not able by order, even with approval by both Houses of Parliament, to vary the two-year qualification period? I believe that it would be a sensible change if we built on the reduction in the 1984 Act from three years to two years by making a further reduction in the qualifying period from two years to one year. I am a moderate man and I make only a modest proposal. On my reading of the Lords amendment, the Minister will not be able to do that by order but will have to propose primary legislation.

If it is reasonable, as I believe it to be, to allow a tenant of 30 years a 60 per cent. discount, why do we not carry the logic further and allow a tenant extra discount according to the total number of years as tenant? Not many people will have been local authority tenants for 30 years or more, but those who have, by definition, will be elderly and will find it difficult to obtain a mortgage. Most will be retired. It would be right to continue the principle that we have fashioned by increasing the discount along with each year of tenancy over the 60 per cent. discount for a house and the 70 per cent. discount on a flat.

Discount depends upon the value of the house or flat. I remind my hon. Friend of an anomaly illustrated by a case on which we had an Adjournment debate on 19 June. Sometimes before a district council places a value on a house or flat it invites the district valuer to give his advice on the open market value of the property. If a tenant disputes that value he has the right of appeal to the district valuer—to the very person who originally advised the council about the open market value of that property. That is manifestly unfair. The district valuer is invited to determine an appeal against a value which he fixed when asked informally by the council for advice.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Surely a tenant can appeal to the land tribunal.

Mr. Gow: I wish that my hon. Friend were right.

Mr. John Fraser: The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is right because when he was Minister he refused to accept my amendment to that effect.

Mr. Gow: I think that the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) is agreeing with me when I say that there is no appeal beyond the district valuer. I did not agree with his amendment, but I regret that the district valuer is both the court of first instance and the court of appeal. I do not necessarily think that the land tribunal is the right body to hear such appeals. However, the valuation issue is so important that there should be a change in the system. I know that we cannot make such a change at this stage, but I urge the Minister to consider the arguments.

When a district council places a value on a property following the application by a tenant to exercise the right to buy it should not at that stage seek advice from the district valuer. The local authority should seek advice from the private sector, from a local estate agent. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) will be pleased at that suggestion. If a tenant disputes the value decided by the district council, it is wrong that he should have to appeal to the person who originally fixed the value.

The House will have noted with warm approval that the one millionth council house was sold in August this year——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): It was in Scotland.

Mr. Gow: I am glad that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary reminds us of that.

One of the reasons why so few flats have been sold compared with houses is that the values placed on flats, whether by district councils, frequently following the advice of the district valuer, or by district valuers on appeal, are too high. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister does not agree with me but that is so. Too often there is no comparison by which either the council or the district valuer can decide a value. The only way in which we can determine the open market value of an empty flat, whether on the 10th or the 20th floor, is to put it up for sale. That will tell us its value with unerring accuracy and indisputable logic.

I hope that in the next Bill which my hon. Friend the Minister introduces he will reconsider this vital issue of the value of flats. I congratulate the other place on having introduced this excellent amendment and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will very shortly submit to both Houses of Parliament proposals to increase the discount on the sales of houses and flats, so that extra discount will continue to be given according to the number of years that someone has been a local authority tenant.

Finally, I commend to all hon. Members a deep study of the astonishing declaration of policy made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: One of the benefits of attending this sort of debate is that one learns something new. I am indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) for clearing up my misapprehension about appeals against a district valuer's valuation. I had been labouring under that misapprehension for some considerable time. But I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne will forgive me for suggesting that he is obviously labouring under a misapprehension too in thinking that I have any great empathy with estate agents, since I have no connection with that profession and not generally much sympathy for it either.

I wish to underscore a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) when he referred to the maximum level of discount allowable. In the outer south-east, and many parts of London, the average valuation of council houses is very high. The valuation of a council house in my constituency would have to be put at £40,000 or £41,000 or less for someone to obtain the maximum discount on it. One cannot buy any council house in my constituency for less than that price, and that means that someone who has clocked up his full 30 years is very much on the borderline at the bottom end of the market, and as he moves up the market he is increasingly penalised. Anyone living in a semi-detached house — many were built by the former Commission for the New Towns and by the Hemel Hempstead development corporation—would automatically be penalised. Three or four-bedroomed detached council houses were built for middle and senior management. Some people moved from London and have been in them since they were first built. They have not taken advantage of the opportunity to buy, and have no prospect of doing so at the moment unless they have very significant savings.

That difficulty is compounded by the fact that house prices in those areas move up more sharply than in other parts of the country. The problem gets worse and worse. Thus, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give some sympathetic consideration to the points that have been raised.

I welcome the positive steps that my hon. Friend has taken in response to the pressure put on him by myself and other Back Benchers in Committee. The amendment represents progress, although I wish that the Minister had gone further. Someone contemplating buying a flat or house in the areas represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East and myself would find that prices were increasing too fast for any savings that he could possibly make. Therefore, we should review the maximum discount regularly simply to keep the price of those houses and flats within the reach of those who live in them.

5.45 pm

There is an opportunity for people to freeze the price originally for two years, and now for three years as, I am glad to say, my hon. Friend the Minister accepted my amendment. However it would have been much more satisfactory if that had been extended ad infinitum, as it would have brought all of the houses and flats eventually within the reach of those who live in them.

The Government have made a significant move. There is no doubt that it has certainly been more difficult to sell flats than houses. That to a large extent is because of the price. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne that the absence of market indicators about what that price should be has been no help in trying to establish what people can afford. I hope that one consequence of the legislation will be to extend the same sort of opportunity to tenants of flats.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) was characteristically gentle, but at the same time hostile towards many of the people in his constituency and other parts of London who want to buy their council houses and flats. He suggested that, according to Labour party policy, portable discounts might be available to people instead of them buying the houses or flats in which they live. But that

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

defeats the whole point of the exercise, because many of my constituents and, no doubt, those of the hon. Member for Norwood have bought their houses and flats because they are their cherished homes. They are not simply bricks and mortar, but the places in which they have lived and brought up their families, and to which they have made many improvements. They may have brought their gardens up to the standards that they want. They may like the neighbourhood because it is close to the facilities that they use.

If the portable discount scheme became a substitute for the right to buy, those people would have to uproot and shift out, thus bringing even more pressure to bear on land and housing in outer London and the south-east. That area already has enough problems.

It was with great reluctance that I agreed to the proposal put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne when he was Minister that portable discounts should apply to tenants of charitable housing association houses. Those people must enjoy the same privileges as any other tenant where public money is involved. They, too, should have the right to buy the houses or flats in which they live. The attitude of the other place on this matter is absolutely reprehensible. When I spoke to Lord Selkirk, one of the principal peers involved in defeating the Government on that occasion, and invited him to discuss the matter with charitable housing association tenants in my constituency, he refused point blank to do so. He said that he was not interested in their point of view. That is all too typical of the attitude of those in another place who enjoy the privilege of owning one, two, three or more houses but who have at every opportunity sought to restrict home ownership.

I have great pleasure in supporting the Government's amendment, although I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond to my criticisms about its omissions.

Mr. Maxton: It is with some trepidation that a Scottish Member of Parliament intervenes in what is essentially an English debate and an English Bill. I must point out to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) that the Earl of Selkirk normally takes his seat in the House of Lords on the Conservative side——

Mr. Robert B. Jones: So what?

Mr. Maxton: Lord Selkirk is the uncle of the Conservative Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and the entire Housing (Scotland) Bill is about him. That Bill is largely about giving housing association tenants the right to buy. The Minister has shown the greatest concern for one housing association above all others — the Link housing association in Barnton in the constituency of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West. One of the most of the interesting things about the whole debate has been how the uncle of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West has spent most of the time trying to ensure that that is not affected.

I rise to speak because amendment No. 4 is related entirely to Scotland. Even if the Government had had a complete change of heart and had decided to abolish discounts altogether at this late stage, I would still have objected, either from the Back Benches or from the Opposition Dispatch Box, to the fact that we have a major Scottish clause in a Bill relating to England and Wales. I accept that part II on planning covers Scotland, but part I is related to housing in England and Wales and does not cover Scotland.

The Minister's excuse for that is that it was too late to introduce a similar clause in the Housing (Scotland) Bill, the final stages of which will be dealt with by the House tomorrow. I do not understand that. The Housing (Scotland) Bill started its progress through the House of Commons in November, nearly 12 months ago. The Minister now tells us that it is too late to include an amendment that the Minister himself described as a sensible proposal. I said at the time that the Minister's reason was feeble and he tried to deny that, but he has made no effort to explain why this amendment is sensible now when it appeared to make no impact on the Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office in November. It did not even impinge upon him. Why, if it is sensible today, was it not sensible then? If it was not sensible in November, why was not it sensible when the Government came to change the discounts yet again on flats? That amendment was included in the Housing (Scotland) Bill in another place and we debated it here. It is an insult to Scottish Members of Parliament and the way in which Scottish legislation is considered in the House for a clause of this nature to be suddenly put into a Bill at this late stage.

It is time that the House took a decision about what is and what is not Scottish legislation. There should be a clear demarcation between Scottish and English legislation. A measure relating to housing in Scotland should go into Scottish legislation. That is the custom for most of our legislation and yet suddenly the Government consistently abuse that by including clauses relating to Scotland in other Bills.

The Minister tried to suggest that every party's views on the right to buy differed from those of the Government and that somehow or other this was a popular measure. That has always been the argument. The Government almost make it clear that discounts and the right to buy are a matter of buying votes among council house tenants. It is worth pointing out that since 1979, when the Government introduced the right to buy and then the first discounts, charging them once and now again, their popularity in Scotland has gone down and down. The latest opinion poll showed them enjoying the marvellous support of 14 per cent. of the Scottish people. Five Conservative Members of Parliament out of 21 will be lucky if they hold their seats at the next general election. That is what the Scottish people think about the Government and this type of legislation. *[Interruption.]* I know that the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) is bitterly disappointed that the Prime Minister overlooked him yet again in the reshuffle. I read in the press that he was expecting high office but did not get it.

The Minister will have a difficult job explaining to the House why this Scottish clause is in the Bill and he will have an even more difficult job explaining why such legislation is not in a Scottish Bill. I and my hon. Friends will vote against the amendment tonight.

Mr. Ancram: I was amazed to hear the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) question the popularity of the right to buy in Scotland. He said that its unpopularity was evinced by the fact that every time we put up discounts our popularity declined. The Labour party conference last March considered a report drawn up by an academic who used to be a Labour councillor. He

discovered that 67 per cent. of Labour supporters wanted the right to buy. That is why at that conference the Labour party in Scotland decided to stop opposing the sale of council houses—*[Interruption.]* It did not follow the English and it did not pursue the path of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr, (Mr. Rooker).

When I pressed the hon. Member for Cathcart, during the passage of the Bill, to tell us the policy of the Labour party in Scotland he consistently refused to do so. It is refreshing to hear from the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) that at least the Labour party is clear on its policy down here, even though he may disagree with it. I hope that he will advise his hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart before we get too much nearer a general election that it would at least be honest to tell the Scottish people what Labour party policy is.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister must be unable to read. The Labour party passed its policy document at the March conference. If his advisers are incapable of obtaining a copy, I will send him one. There are differences between housing in Scotland and England. That is why we have separate housing legislation. I wish that the Minister would accept that.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman keeps taking refuge in that document. On a previous occasion he offered to send me a copy. I have been waiting five months, but it has not yet arrived. I suspect that I know why. When the millionth council house was sold in Moray in September 1986 I was listening to the car radio as I travelled to London and I heard the hon. Gentleman making it clear that he opposed the right to buy. Obviously, he does not want to send me that document if it undermines his own arguments.

The hon. Gentleman asks "Why now?" The reasons for the amendment were set out most persuasively by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction and I shall not try to add to those. The proposal is sensible. We came to that view at the same time —*[Interruption.]* We come to many sensible conclusions together on the Conservative Benches even if Labour Members are unable to do so. At the end of July the Housing (Scotland) Bill had already left the House of Lords and returned to this House, so it was not possible to insert the provision. If the hon. Member for Cathcart checks our proceedings, he will discover that. It was therefore decided that the provisions should be inserted in this Bill. If we do not have similar provisions for Scotland and England, different discounts might apply in the future merely because of geographical differences, as my hon. Friends mentioned. That would cause great resentment among the 67 per cent. of Labour supporters in Scotland who want the right to buy.

The logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument is that we should have differences between Scotland and England. It is surprising how selective he is. When we have differences in the rating of sports clubs because the law in England is different from the law in Scotland, for example, the hon. Gentleman is among the first to ask me to legislate to bring the law in Scotland into line. On that, I rest my case.

6 pm

Mr. John Patten: We all greatly enjoyed that skirmish. I hope that it is clear from the debate that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland and I are at one on this matter. We have had many consultations and have reached exactly the same conclusions at different times.

I listened with great care to the brief speech of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) in which he restated well-known Labour party policy on the right to buy. There are considerable differences between us and I shall not attempt to elaborate on them. There was nothing new in his position any more than there would be in mine if I repeated it this evening. We simply disagree on the constitutional propriety of changing discounts by order. To make even minor changes to discounts can be a long drawn out business involving primary legislation. It is for the convenience of good government and for the administration of the House to change discounts by order. I am sorry that we disagree about that because we agreed on many matters in Committee.

The speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was much more interesting in terms of new information. Those of us who were lucky enough to be present listened to it with great attention. I listened with some interest to what he said about mortgages, but I am still entirely unclear about the attitude of the alliance towards mortgage interest tax relief. The hon. Gentleman seemed to support the status quo, but he painted a completely different picture from that which he gave yesterday on the excellent television programme "This Week Next Week", on which we were privileged to appear together with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). We shall have to continue looking at the alliance position on mortgage interest tax relief.

We are on clearer ground about the right to buy because the hon. Gentleman was specific about that. He spoke on behalf of the alliance—that is, the Liberal and Social Democratic parties—although his hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), the SDP Front Bench spokesman, was also present. First, he said that this was a constitutional issue and that if one wanted to put discounts up or down one should have the opportunity to do so. That must mean that the alliance intends at least to consider reducing the discounts available to council tenants, should it ever have the opportunity. If not, why argue for such a power in the first place? That revelation is now on the record.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) almost shot my fox—a disgusting habit—on the hon. Gentleman's second point. I repeat my hon. Friend's comments. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was speaking as the alliance spokesman on housing, it is now clear that it is alliance policy to bring about substantial changes in the right to buy for council tenants of flats and houses if it ever gets the opportunity. Throughout the country, prospective council house purchasers will want to know whether they will be affected. They will want to know whether a person in place A will receive a bigger discount than a person in place B, and whether a person in place C will be given the chance to buy while a person in place D will not because the local council has so decided. The alliance cannot have it both ways. We now have it on the record as official alliance policy that substantial changes to the right-to-buy legislation will be made. We want to know who the losers will be, where they are, how many people will be threatened and how, and we shall find that out in the next

[Mr. John Patten]

18 months. For once, we have had a straight answer from an alliance spokesman and it is on the record that the alliance is not fully in favour of the right to buy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: No, Sir. The hon. Gentleman did not permit me to intervene in his speech.

I now turn to friendlier territory—and what could be friendlier than the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) and for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones)? Both pressed me about the upper limit of £25,000. It is, indeed, a serious issue and applies to the right-to-buy discount by virtue of an order under section 131 of the Housing Act 1985. Many hon. Members have urged me to raise that limit and I am considering the matter now. I hope to make my views known shortly — to use that deathless ministerial parlance. On the second point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East — the question of making information available to local authorities such as his excellent authorities in Bracknell and the royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, which have done so much to promote the right to buy—I will ensure that they have full information about the new provisions of what I hope will soon become the Housing and Planning Act 1986 well in advance of the due date of the Act becoming law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne raised a couple of important points about the qualifying period. Alas, the powers which the House is invited to approve this evening do not extend to that and further primary legislation will be needed. Obviously, I must turn my attention to that in the future as well as to my hon. Friend's point about the valuation placed on flats, which he also raised in his interesting speech on Second Reading to which I had the chance to respond.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West spoke of the need to keep under continuous review the level of discount, the dates on which houses were purchased and their relation to the discount obtaining at that time. It has been a most interesting debate and I have been able to assure many of my hon. Friends about detailed points on the amendment, but above all this debate will be remembered by all of us as the one when the alliance finally revealed its policy on the right to buy.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 190, Noes 121.

Division No. 305] **[6.10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, J. W.
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 4 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Clause 2

SERVICE CHARGES PAYABLE AFTER EXERCISE OF RIGHT TO BUY

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 3, line 6, leave out "service charges" and insert—

"—*(a)* service charges, or

(b) improvement contributions."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I beg to move that this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 6 to 16, 19 to 23, 54, 169A, 169B, 170 to 177, 187 and 204 to 207.

Mr. John Fraser: There is a problem with forecasting service charges and the landlord, be it a local authority or a housing association, finding that, because of an absolutely genuine change of circumstances, it cannot get back the money that it has spent on service charges because the amount spent exceeds the estimate given when the right to buy was exercised.

In Committee, the Minister gave an undertaking that he would consider the plight of smaller local authorities and housing associations which may have no reserves with which to deal with such an unanticipated and unavoidable strain on its funds. What will the Minister do as a result of the undertakings that he gave in Committee?

Mr. Tracey: As the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) will know, the provisions contained in new paragraphs 16C of schedule 6 to the Housing Act 1985 were criticised in Committee on the ground that a minority of leaseholders in a block of flats might either block the carrying out of improvements which were highly desirable, or have the benefit of the improvements without having to pay anything for them.

The amendments delete the provisions which were criticised and put in their place provisions modelled on the limitations which clause 2 imposes on service charges for repairs in the early years of the lease. The effect of the new provisions is that a tenant who claims to exercise the right to buy a flat will have to be given an estimate of any contributions to be required under the lease in respect of improvement costs incurred during, broadly speaking, the first five years of the lease. Those estimates will then set a limit to the contributions which can be recovered, except that there will be an inflation allowance. There will thus be a common regime for improvement contributions and for contributions to repair costs. In both cases, the landlord will be free to seek whatever contributions may properly be required of the leaseholder under the lease, but during the first five years the leaseholder will not have to make any payments of which notice was not given before the sale.

I fully understand what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I hope that the House agrees that we are trying to strike a fair balance between the interests of the leaseholder and those of the landlord and other occupants of the block. I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about the type of housing association which cannot cover all of its costs when carrying out repairs because of problems with service charges. I am still sounding out what we can do to help in these rather special circumstances and what provisions we can make to that end.

We have to establish a common regime and a common balance between the interests of the leaseholder and the interests of the landlord. We are trying to do that. That is why we ask the House to agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. John Fraser: With the leave of the House, may I say that that was a lot of rubbish and waffle. It had

[Mr. John Fraser]

nothing whatever to do with fairness and balance. If it had, the same regime would apply to the private landlord. It is absolutely untrue to speak of fairness and balance.

A private landlord would be able under schedule 19 of the Housing Act 1980 to recover moneys that were fairly expended on maintaining and servicing property. What happens if a landlord gives a reasonable estimate of what expenditure is to be during the next five years and something utterly unexpected happens? There may, for example, be an extremely severe winter which damages the fabric of the building. The landlord quite reasonably has to recover the money involved from the tenant. Especially for small housing associations, there may be no other source of funds. What will happen in those circumstances?

Although large local authorities may have the funds necessary to met such unexpected expenditure, it is quite unfair for the housing revenue account and other tenants to have to bear the expense. As I said before, calling that fair and reasonable is rubbish and waffle.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 6 to 16 agreed to.

New Clause

CONSULTATION BEFORE DISPOSAL TO PRIVATE SECTOR LANDLORD

Lords amendment: No. 17, before clause 4, insert the following new clause—

" .—(1) In Part IV of the Housing Act 1985 (secure tenancies and rights of secure tenants), after section 106 insert—

106A.—(1) The provisions of Schedule 3A have effect with respect to the duties of—

(a) a local authority proposing to dispose of dwelling-houses subject to secure tenancies, and

(b) the Secretary of State in considering whether to give his consent to such a disposal,

to have regard to the views of tenants liable as a result of the disposal to cease to be secure tenants.

(2) In relation to a disposal to which that Schedule applies, the provisions of that Schedule apply in place of the provisions of section 105 (consultation on matters of housing management).".

(2) After Schedule 3 to the Housing Act 1985 insert as Schedule 3A the Schedule set out in Schedule *(Consultation before disposal to private sector landlord)* to this Act (consultation before disposal to private sector landlord).

(3) The amendments made by this section apply to disposals after the commencement of this section."

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we can take Lords amendments Nos. 26 and 27 and the amendment thereto, No. 169 and the amendment thereto and No. 201A

Mr. Patten: It will be useful to have a debate on this important issue. We have here a daunting group of amendments which honour an undertaking that I gave in Committee and which give council tenants a statutory right to be consulted about proposals which would transfer ownership or management of their homes—not their dwelling units—to another body.

I shall concentrate on amendments Nos. 17, 169 and 27 as they contain the main changes on the subject. Amendments Nos. 17 and 169 insert the new section 106A and the new schedule 3A into the Housing Act 1985. Those are important pieces of detail.

One of my local newspapers had my handwriting analysed recently by a professional graphologist. It was an independent assessment. The graphologist was not told who or what I was, and said that the writer had no grasp of detail, preferred the broad brush approach and was probably an actor or a Member of Parliament. I now feel that I must read out the detailed matters with some determination so that the excellent *Courier* newspaper series realises that there was a small mistake in the graphologist's otherwise excellent analysis of my handwriting. It was my best handwriting as well—that is what I found so irritating.

6.30 pm

The effect of these amendments is to give council tenants a statutory right to be consulted about proposals to sell their homes to a private landlord. They provide that the Secretary of State shall not give his consent to a disposal if he is satisfied that a majority of the tenants are opposed to it.

Amendment No. 27, which inserts a new section 27A into the 1985 Act, makes similar provision in relation to proposals to delegate the management of tenanted council dwellings to another body. These are lengthy amendments because it is necessary to spell out in some detail—and I was pressed hard in Committee about this—how the consultation arrangements are to work. This is done in new schedule 3A and new section 27A. These provisions place specific duties on the councils to consult their tenants—duties that councils will not be able to evade or skimp as the Secretary of State will be able to ensure that councils comply with them in full.

The amendments will require local authorities to consult tenants fully and to take their views into account before making an application to the Secretary of State. Tenants will have to be told of any significant changes made to the scheme after they have been consulted, including any modifications made to meet their objections.

The tenants will then have a further period of at least 28 days in which to lodge any remaining objections directly with the Secretary of State. If the Secretary of State concludes as a result of this consultation that the majority of tenants are opposed to the proposal, he will not be able to give consent and the scheme will not proceed. Before considering any application for his consent, the Secretary of State will be concerned to see that there were no shortcomings in the way in which the consultation was carried out. If necessary, he will have the power to require the council to carry out further consultations.

As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is seeking to delete paragraph (6) of new schedule 3A and subsection 27A(7) which are contained in this group of amendments, I must stress that the Secretary of State will be an effective long stop in seeing that the consultations are complied with properly.

These provisions provide that a transfer of ownership or management to a private body which takes place with the Secretary of State's prior consent cannot be declared void because of any failure on his part or that of the relevant council to comply with the new consultation provisions. These provisions are essential, as without such a guarantee—and it is well precedented—it is unlikely that any private body would be willing to enter into such a transaction which some time thereafter might be

overturnable strictly in law because of some minor technical flaw — for example, in the dissemination of papers.

However, this protection for private bodies where transactions have taken place in good faith with the Secretary of State's prior consent does not mean that councils will be able to ignore the new statutory requirements to consult their tenants, and, as I have stressed, the Secretary of State will himself ensure that this is done properly in every case. Furthermore, it will still be open to tenants who feel aggrieved to take their grievance to the courts for redress.

As for precedents, similar provisions are to be found, for example, in section 17 of the New Towns Act 1981, section 128 of the Local Government Act 1972 and, somewhat surprisingly, in section 23(1) of the infamous Community Land Act 1975. I remember that Act as the cause of my first ever political campaign in my constituency, and we all wore stickers declaring, "Stop the land grab". That was our reaction to the Community Land Act 1975. Given the circumstances of this well-precedented power, I hope that, following my assurances, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey will not feel it necessary to press his amendments.

The provisions that have come from another place will put on a statutory footing the general principles which it has already been Government policy to apply throughout by administrative means. On no occasion has consent been given in any way other than entirely in conformity with the general principles to which I am referring. We are simply putting into law what we have already been doing because people have been concerned. I wanted to react to that concern, and I did so in Committee.

There has been a lot of debate in the other place about the need for ballots and public inquiries. These are possible means of consultation in particular cases — Thamesmead, for example, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), then on the Front Bench, played such a formidable part to bring about change.

But not all disposals will be of that kind. They will vary. There could be a ballot or a public inquiry, but these could be quite inappropriate in cases involving one, two, three or four tenanted properties. The tenants must always be given full details in writing, and I pledge that they will get that. They can object to the proposals simply by writing to the Secretary of State. In other instances, the council itself might well wish to hold meetings with the tenants affected to clarify its proposals and, for example, to provide a questionnaire on which tenants could give a number of opinions. In my view, the requirement for a particular form of consultation in all places at all times is a bit inflexible.

We shall be looking very closely at the reaction of councils whose tenants seek opportunities to begin to manage their own affairs. I shall be looking closely at the attitudes of councils towards approaches by prospective co-operatives, management co-operatives and so on, in the ever changing tapestry of new forms of housing tenure, particularly in our cities.

These amendments give us what the House wants and certainly what the Committee wanted — a basic requirement for consultation by the local authority with provision for the Secretary of State to ask for further consultation where he considers it necessary in the form he considers it necessary. The Secretary of State can insist on proper consultation, but he can be flexible about how it is carried out. I think that that is the right approach.

Mr. Rooker: I am grateful to the Minister for going out of his way to explain some of the points involved. He referred to groups of tenants going to the local authority. I may have misunderstood, but I believe that that relates to another clause in the Bill — clause 7, which was inserted in Committee. We are now discussing the operation of old clauses 4 and 6 relating to disposal of ownership and sub-contracting of management. I would not want to confuse the two issues. The other is a new right for tenants to demand and seek co-operatives and to get a response from the local authority.

We are grateful for the amendments. That is absolutely clear because they arose from pressure on the Government in Committee. The Minister wrote to me as long ago as 23 April to say that it was not possible to put the amendments in the Bill on Report. There was a good reason for that — the Bill was railroaded and bulldozed through the House. Following consideration in Committee, it came back on Report within a week or a fortnight. Then, for no reason that I have been able to discover, it spent three months in the other place, although nothing happened between April and July.

When the Minister wrote to me on 23 April saying that there would be proposals for consultation for tenants, he listed some of the principles to be used. He went on to say:

"You will see that this arrangement will give tenants an effective right of veto where the majority are opposed to a disposal of tenanted property or to a management agreement."

I put that sentence on the record during the Report stage. It is an important point. Nobody says that the same system has to be used throughout the country; there are many ways in which it can be implemented.

Subsection (5) of Lords amendment No. 27 says:

"The Secretary of State shall not give his approval if it appears to him that a majority of the tenants of the houses to which the agreement relates do not wish the proposal to proceed".

The Secretary of State must find out about that. It would not be acceptable to have a show of hands at a public meeting. As long as a detailed proposal is put to the tenants and fully explained to them, I cannot see what is wrong with a ballot.

One of the Minister's civil servants, an assistant secretary, Jenny Williams, attended a seminar——

Mr. John Patten: She is a talented person.

Mr. Rooker: I have no doubt that she is talented. That seminar was held at the Housing Centre Trust in April this year and her speech was reported in the July-August edition of *Housing Review*. However, I read the article only today. Now I know why I am getting so much "stick", because of the way in which my name has been used to excuse certain Government policies. In discussing aspects of the Government's policy, she said:

"Ministers have promised to consider making statutory provision for tenants to be consulted individually on such proposals".

That refers to the proposals to sub-contract management and dispose of sites.

I hope that tenants will be consulted individually by means of a ballot. I do not assume that it will be consultation à la Langbaurgh. A system of individual counselling would be unacceptable as a means of obtaining

[Mr. Rooker]

a decision. After the proposals have been discussed and the details examined, I do not see why a ballot of the tenants cannot take place. In the other place, the Government spokesman repeated again and again that a majority of the tenants would have to be in favour and that it would have to be clearly shown that they were in favour of the proposal. On 7 October, the Minister used the phrase

"It really is a veto by tenants."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 7 October 1986; Vol. 144, c. 199.]

"Veto" is an extremely powerful word. Everybody understands what it means, One need only look at Northern Ireland, with which the Minister is more familiar than I. The people of Northern Ireland understand what that word means. It means that something can be stopped. Tenants must know that they have a collective right, by majority vote, to challenge anything with which they do not agree.

Mr. Cartwright: The hon. Gentleman is aware that an example of a major housing development leaving the public sector in recent years is Thamesmead, most of which is in my constituency. In that case, there was a clear vote by everyone concerned. During the campaign, all points of view were expressed. At the end of it, everybody who was living in the development had an opportunity to vote for the kind of future that they wanted for the area. Is not that the kind of model at which we should be looking?

Mr. Rooker: Yes, it is. I understand that the tenants of the former Cantrell Farm at Knowsley voted on that disposal and that a ballot showed that about 1,000 to six were in favour of the change.

Doubts have been raised, though not by me. I understand what is meant by a veto and I am prepared to accept the Minister's letter on that point. I am also prepared to accept the spirit of the amendment. It represents a substantial advance on the Bill's original proposals. It is not for me to defend the Government's Bill, but I flatly refuse to tell lies about it, although other people have told lies. The Minister must make it absolutely clear that it is a veto, as I understand the meaning of that word and as the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and every other reasonable person understands it. On that basis, we welcome the amendments.

6.45 pm

The Minister said that the wording of paragraph 7 was taken from a precedent littered throughout our legislation, but I presume that it relates only to procedural mistakes and not if a local authority deliberately misled the Secretary of State, causing him to believe that requirements had been met when that was not the case. This system must not be fudged. Deliberate deception must not be allowed to carry the day. Paragraph 7 is drafted in extremely wide terms. If there is a precedent for it in other legislation, there is obviously a reason for it, but I should like the Minister to confirm that those words have indeed been used in previous legislation.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Many misleading statements have been made about the Housing and Planning Bill. That is the only point that was made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) with which I agree.

A leaflet issued by the Campaign Against Sales of Estates says:

"If the Housing and Planning Bill becomes law, it will mean no security, no consultation, no right to stay in your home, tenants could be evicted and their estates sold . . .no right of appeal if tenants don't agree with the plans to sell their estates. . .selling estates means fewer homes."

I am in favour of all three amendments, so to me that leaflet, entitled

"Government Monopoly: A Game of Chance for Council Tenants",

is completely unhelpful. Bearing in mind what my hon. Friend has done to give powers to tenants, it is a disgrace that the leaflet was allowed to be circulated. It was certainly audacious to address the questionnaire to "Mr. John Patten" and to give his address as the House of Commons, despite the fact that the Minister for Housing and Construction is at the Department of the Environment, Marsham street, London SW1.

There have also been headlines in *The Leicester Mercury* such as

"Give us a veto over house sales"

and

"Sales veto claim is misleading."

Another heading is

"Tenant has right to be consulted"

and

"Tenants will not be thrown out of homes".

There has been great concern in Leicester. A few days ago, the direct labour organisation put an "info" leaflet through people's doors saying:

"Councils pressed to sell off housing estates. Leicester on hit list . . .What's Leicester City Council's policy? Leicester City Council is totally against the Bill."

This Bill will do a great deal to help my constituents, in particular Mr. Bill Cooper and the Charnwood Tenants Association, who feel bitterly let down by a council that does not want the estates to be improved.

Amendments Nos. 17 and 169 demonstrate that despite what Leicester city council says the new power will not depend upon the whim of the Secretary of State. The authority will first have to seek his approval and he will have to take certain factors into account before making his decision. In other words, there will be proper consultation before there is any exercise of the right to sell. Account will have to be taken of the effect of the scheme on the extent and character of the housing accommodation in the area and the extent to which the scheme provides for housing to be offered for sale or rent. Most important of all, there will have to be proper consultation with the existing tenants, and people living there will have an absolute say about their future.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr said that there had been lies about the Bill. The council in Leicester had said that there would be no consultation and that the Secretary of State would be able to act without consulting tenants. If approval is given, it will be only after the most careful consideration. There is a power to require further consultation in paragraph 4 of the new schedule, Lords amendment No. 169. My right hon. Friend's consent will be withheld if the majority of tenants are opposed to disposal. No consent will be forthcoming unless it appears to the Secretary of State that the majority of tenants in the dwellings to which the application relates wish the disposal to proceed. That is quite clear. Council tenants will be secure tenants and if the majority do not want their housing estate to be sold, that will be the end of the matter, so my constituents in Leicester, East will be OK.

It will be incumbent on councils to consult, as is only right. Leicester city council is opposed to any privatisation

and to any private funds coming into the city. That is a tragedy, because the only way to improve the housing stock is in partnership with the private sector. The Liecester Tenants Federation, which comprises 36 tenants' organisations and is led by Mr. Don Connolly, says clearly that the veto that tenants need must be spelt out clearly. The federation says:

"We do not know of any tenants who want their homes sold".

The federation is not properly representing my constituents in council property because some of those tenants would like their homes to be sold. If the majority agree, we shall have a sale. Otherwise, as my hon. Friend the Minister has made clear, those houses cannot be sold.

It is important to note that each tenant will be individually informed. I wish that Conservative Members would stress that fact and nail the lies that are being put about. It is clear from the Bill that notice in writing will be given. It is also clear that a tenant will have 28 days to send any objection to the Secretary of State. Those are clear reasons for supporting the amendments, which will ensure that tenants who want proper consultation have the final say. The Minister has made it clear in a helpful letter to me that there is no possibility of an immediate handover of a council estate to a private developer. The veto exists and the management and ownership of an estate can be delegated or transferred only with the approval of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Rooker: May I query the hon. Gentleman's choice of words? As I understand it—if I am wrong, I have been wrong since day one—nothing in the Bill requires a local authority to dispose of its estates.

Mr. Bruinvells: That is correct.

Mr. Rooker: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me because he was giving the impression that local authorities might be forced to dispose of estates. That is not the case.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am delighted to confirm that. I know that many of my constituents would like to have their houses sold to private landlords, but that will not be possible unless the majority agree and even then the council's authority will be required. As I said earlier, Leicester city council has already said that it opposes the Bill and I assume that it will not support the measure when it becomes law. All that I seek is the assurance that my hon. Friend the Minister has already given, which is that there will be much more consultation with tenants and that if they choose to have their properties sold their homes will be properly maintained and additional resources will be brought in. If they do not choose, their right to consultation and a veto will be there from day one.

These are good amendments. Ministers should be congratulated on taking up some of the amendments that were suggested in Committee. I look forward to seeing the Bill become law, because it will ensure that all tenants in Leicester, East and elsewhere, are given proper rights, can live in decent, properly managed property and are given free consultation, with tenants' and residents' associations being in the forefront in helping to maintain a decent quality of life on each estate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I also welcome the Government amendents, which have been produced as a result of the pressure exerted by Opposition Members in Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and Labour Members argued from the start that is was necessary to have proper consultation.

The Government amendments were published on 26 September and I should say to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) that, although I have never seen or heard of the document that he quoted, if it was published before 26 September it is fair to note that at that time there was no statutory provision for consultation. Up to that time, worries that there would be no adequate consultation were sufficiently well founded for people to campaign for such consultation.

The reason for my two probing amendments was to examine subsection (7) of new section 27A and paragraph 6 of the proposed new schedule. The Minister said that those provisions were precedented and a letter from his Department to Lady David set out the precedents.

However, are not the proposed provisions unnecessarily cautious? If there were legal arguments, it might be suggested that if there had been defects in any of the procedures, including the consultation, there would be no going back on the decision. I understand that unscrambling legal eggs, transferring management of estates and so on, is extremely complex, but I have a number of questions for the Minister and we must have answers if the proper anxieties about whether the reference to "veto" means that there really will be a veto are to be allayed. These are not unfounded anxieties. Shelter has taken counsel's advice, which is that the Government's proposals would allow the veto to be watered down.

Is it correct that consent could be given if a local authority had wittingly or unwittingly misled the Secretary of State about the reasons for the failure to comply or if there had been some neglect—not necessarily culpable—within the Department, either by Ministers or officials? It is suggested that any tenant's challenge to the Secretary of State's decision to give consent would not make any disposal void by invalidating the consent, whatever the basis of the challenge and however serious the substance of the argument.

Is it correct that there will be no other remedy open to a tenant if something has gone wrong? He will not be able to get damages for a wrong, negligent or technically deficient decision and would have suffered the loss of a secure tenancy or a change of management against his wish. That might be important if there had been a close vote, perhaps 51 to 49.

Have the Minister and his officials examined alternative wording to make it expressly clear that the Secretary of State will be concerned only about technical rather than substantial deficiencies in the procedure? The legal advice to Shelter suggested that wording such as

"a failure . . . to comply with such requirements as were unnecessary in all the circumstances to be complied with",

followed by a specific list of technical deficiencies, would be clearer.

7 pm

Perhaps the Minister's officials will be able to advise him whether there are differences with the precedents. I accept that the formula has been used before because I have come across it before during my three and a half years as a Member. which seems all too short a period. Section 17 of the New Towns Act 1982 has more limited scope because it does not affect people specifically. As it is

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

related to the disposal of land, it affects them only indirectly. The Minister will remember that the Community Land Act 1975 is also about disposals of land. However, it includes an alternative remedy, that of prosecution and fine, in the event of a technical breach. Under the Local Government Act 1972, no secure tenants were affected.

My last question is whether the Minister accepts that all of the precedents for the formula were introduced in different circumstances and do not affect directly the rights of secure tenants to make it better or appropriate now to accept the amendments that I have brought before the House, or at least to think again about the drafting of the measure.

I am prepared to take the Minister's word on these matters. I was not a member of the Committee which considered the Bill, but I am aware of the debates in Committee and the pressure which was put on the Minister. I have read also the reports of the debates in another place. If the Government accept the consultation process, and accept also, to use the words of the hon. Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Leicester, East, that veto means veto, we cannot have a clause that suggests that veto does not mean veto.

I ask for the Minister's considered response to my argument. There is legal opinion and professional opinion that at present the veto is not secure. The Minister must be clear on this issue because many people outside this place are worried about the security of the Government's policy on a matter of great importance to many who are presently council tenants. I refer to the future disposal of management of their estates.

Mr. John Patten: I must respond to the issues raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who made a telling contribution, and by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). To take up the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Perry Barr, I have read twice what I regard as the key phrase in my speech which is: "If the Secretary of State concludes as a result of this consultation that the majority of tenants are opposed to the proposal, he will not be able to give consent, and the scheme will not proceed." I do not want to get into Gertrude Steinish stuff about a veto is a veto is a veto, but I cannot be any clearer in spelling out that which is contained in that part of my speech.

I have been reminded by a note which has been placed in front of me—which after due graphological analysis I divine to have been written by the same Mrs. Williams to whom the hon. Member for Perry Barr referred—that tenants will be consulted individually in writing. I hope that that writing will be slightly clearer than Mrs. Williams's. The note continues:

"See 27(1)*(a)* etc. as predicted at the seminar."

That means that the Secretary of State will have all the information that she or he needs to determine whether the majority of tenants are opposed to the scheme. If the majority object, the scheme cannot go ahead. I do not think that I can be any clearer than that. I am putting the matter in different ways so that there is a choice of words which can be plucked from my speeches and used, I hope, in the publicity material delivered by the direct labour organisation, at huge expense to ratepayers in Leicester, including the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East. I want to see one of the little red leaflets go through every door. I trust that they will state, first, what I have said this afternoon, followed by an apology for unnecessarily frightening or scaring tenants about their prospects in my hon. Friend's constituency and, secondly, draw to the attention of tenants the fact that in another part of the Bill tenants in Leicester, East, as I know my hon. Friend wants, will have a full opportunity to form up to Leicester city council, that amazingly interesting body, and tell it that they wish to have the opportunity to manage their own affairs.

That is what the Bill does; that is the opportunity that the Bill provides for tenants; and I note that thus far Leicester city council has suppressed at every turn that information. If the council wants to give me the space in its little pamphlet, I shall happily write free of charge within a very short time an explanatory article on the new rights that tenants will have as well as the protection which the hon. Member for Perry Barr and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East want tenants to have in future. Incidentally, I have a lot of money on my hon. Friend retaining his seat at the next general election, including a number of side bets.

I have tried to explain that the provisions that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey seeks to amend provide that the transfer of ownership or management to a private body that takes place with the Secretary of State's prior consent cannot be declared void because of any failure on his part. In reaching that decision, we took into account many of the points to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. In this Bill we must seek to be free and fair in our attitude to all parties, and we must make sure that all the parties understand their obligations. I refer to the council, the tenants and any third party that is involved. We have picked the words as drafted extremely carefully and, following the care with which the provisions are drafted, I cannot imagine any tenant finding herself or himself in the position to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. Secondly, we have considered the wording extremely carefully and we believe that it is clear. It is aimed only at technical difficulties of the sort that I mentioned in my introductory remarks.

I have given every undertaking that I possibly can both in Committee and on the Floor of the House this evening. I hope that the Bill will proceed unamended.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amemdments Nos. 18 to 23 agreed to.

Clause 5

REDEVELOPMENT OF DWELLING-HOUSE SUBJECT TO SECURE TENANCY

Lords amendment No. 24 agreed to.

Clause 6

MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

Lords amendments Nos. 25 to 27 agreed to.

Clause 7

PROPOSALS FOR CO-OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OR OWNERSHIP

Lords amendments Nos. 28 to 35 agreed to.

Clause 8

EXTENSION OF ASSURED TENANCIES SCHEME TO CASES WHERE WORKS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT

Lords amendment: No. 36, in page 24, leave out lines 35 to 37 and insert—

"*Certification of fitness for purposes of s. 56B*

56C.—(1) An approved body having an interest in a dwelling-house which it proposes to let on an assured tenancy may—

(a) apply in writing to the local housing authority for a certificate that the dwelling-house is fit for human habitation, or

(b) submit to the local housing authority a list of works which it proposes to carry out to the dwelling-house with a request in writing for the authority's opinion whether the dwelling-house would, after the execution of the works, be fit for human habitation;

and the authority shall as soon as may be after receiving the application or request, and upon payment of such reasonable fee, as they may determine, take the matter into consideration.

(2) If the authority are of opinion that the dwelling-house is fit for human habitation, they shall give the approved body a certificate to that effect.

(3) If the authority are of opinion that the dwelling-house will be fit for human habitation after the execution of the proposed works, they shall inform the approved body that they are of that opinion.

(4) In any other case, the authority shall give the approved body a list of the works which in their opinion are required to make the dwelling-house fit for human habitation.

(5) Where the authority have responded in accordance with subsection (3) or (4) and the works in question have been executed to their satisfaction, they shall, if the approved body applies in writing, and upon payment of such reasonable fee as the authority may determine, give the body a certificate that the dwelling-house is fit for human habitation.

(6) For the purpose of determining whether the condition in section 56B(1)*(b)* was satisfied in any case (fitness of dwelling-house on relevant date), but not for any other purpose, a certificate given under this section is conclusive evidence that the dwelling-house was fit for human habitation on the date on which the certificate was given.

(7) In this section 'the local housing authority' has the same meaning as in the Housing Act 1985.

Fitness for human habitation

56D. In determining for any of the purposes of section 56B or 56C whether a dwelling-house is, or would be, fit for human habitation, regard shall be had to its condition in respect of the following matters—

repair,
stability,
freedom from damp
internal arrangement,
natural lighting, ventilation,
water supply,
drainage and sanitary conveniences,
facilities for the preparation and cooking of food and disposal of waste water;

and the dwelling-house shall be deemed to be unfit only if it is, or would be, so far defective in one or more of those matters as to be not reasonably suitable for occupation in that condition.".

(3) In section 57 of the Housing Act 1980 (effect of interest of landlord ceasing to belong to approved body), in subsections (1) and (2) for "section 56(3)*(a)*" substitute "section 56(1)*(b)*"."

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 37 and 39.

Mr. Rooker: The phrase "fit for human habitation" appears throughout the new clauses. I understand that there is no change in the fitness standards as enumerated in 56D. Does "fit for human habitation" mean the same

Mr. John Patten: Good heavens, I am searching for words here. We have not altered the standard—that is absolutely correct. However, I must elaborate on this point because it is extremely important and I may have to return to it for some little time.

We have not altered the standard. When our proposals to extend the assured tenancy scheme were first introduced in Committee, the standard chosen was the fitness standard to which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referred. I believe that my memory serves me right and that it is contained in section 604 of the Housing Act 1985. The Opposition did not object to that then, as far as I can recall from the debates. Although the standard is now stated in great detail in the Bill, it remains, effectively, the same as the standard which appeared before us in Committee.

Section 604 of the Housing Act 1985 refers to fitness for human habitation as:

"repair, stability, freedom from damp, internal arrangement, natural lighting, ventilation, water supply, drainage and sanitary conveniences, facilities for the preparation and cooking of food and for the disposal of waste water."

That relates only to the fitness standard, which is not the same as "in good repair". We intend to deal with the important issue of good repair, after due consultation with local authorities, by the application of a prescribed amount. We have consulted about the proposition; on that the prescribed amount should be £5,000 in London and £4,000 in the rest of England and Wales. I emphasise that that consultation is an extremely important exercise, which will lead to tests of fitness and also to places being in good repair before they are let under the approved tenancy scheme. I have already written to the hon. Member for Perry Barr explaining why we propose those levels and the basis on which we have decided to consult.

I should reiterate—and the words are beginning to come back to me now—that there is no objective test of fitness for human habitation. In the Housing Act 1985, we tried to be as objective as possible. Nor is there an objective test for what is "good repair". There is an element of subjectivity. We tried to achieve a reasonable level through the application of the prescribed amounts, on which I intend to consult.

Mr. Rooker: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is not the place to discuss the Minister's consultation on prescribed amounts, although I repeat what I said in Committee, that the Minister has set these amounts at too low a level. Explicit in the assured tenancy scheme is the fact that the landlord is out to get the market rent.

My hon. Friends and I have discussed what is "fit for human habitation". It is about the lowest of the low. A house fit for human habitation may lack basic amenities; it is still fit without hot or cold water. It still meets the fitness standards — crazy though that may seem. It would be difficult for landlords to obtain a market rent under assured tenancies if they operated at the lowest possible level.

I ask only whether there is a difference between "fitness for human habitation" and "in good repair". The difference is the wrong way. Landlords participating

[Mr. Rooker]

within the scheme—which has the Opposition's support with the caveats which I established in Committee—had better beware of that.

Mr. Patten: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for tossing me a challenge to try to describe the difference between "fit for human habitation" and "in good repair". He should be reassured by two things. First, no landlord could let tenancies successfully under the assured tenancy scheme with the rentals he would seek to attract if the property was unfit for human habitation and/or not in good repair. Secondly, before any landlord was able to let such property, he would have to seek registration from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. If at any stage it was clear that he was not providing accommodation of a suitable standard, that registration could be withdrawn. Registration is debatable in the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 37 to 39 agreed to.

New Clause

HOUSING THE HOMELESS

Lords amendment: No. 40, before clause 10, insert the following new clause—

".—(1) The Housing Act 1985 shall be amended in accordance with the following provisions.

(2) In section 58 (definition of homelessness) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(2A) A person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy.

(2B) Regard may be had, in determining whether it would be reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation, to the general circumstances prevailing in relation to housing in the district of the local housing authority to whom he has applied for accommodation or for assistance in obtaining accommodation.".

(3) For section 69(1) (provisions supplementary to ss. 63, 65 and 68) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(1) A local housing authority may perform any duty under section 65 or 68 (duties to persons found to be homeless) to secure that accommodation becomes available for the occupation of a person—

(a) by making available suitable accommodation held by them under Part II (provision of housing) or any enactment, or

(b) by securing that he obtains suitable accommodation from some other person, or

(c) by giving him such advice and assistance as will secure that he obtains suitable accommodation from some other person,

and in determining whether accommodation is suitable they shall have regard to Part IX (slum clearance), X (overcrowding) and XI (houses in multiple occupation) of this Act.".".

7.15 pm

Mr. Squire: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I have been a member of the board of Shelter for the past four years, although I stress that, should anyone be in doubt, I have not had a pecuniary interest. That interest allows me some insight into aspects of housing problems.

The law at present defines someone as homeless if he does not have accommodation. If someone is homeless and fulfils certain other conditions, the local authority has a duty to secure accommodation for that person. The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 says nothing about the standards or appropriateness of accommodation. The code of guidance issued by the Secretary of State to guide the local authorities in their interpretation of the law makes it clear that the accommodation to be secured for homeless people should be permanent housing of a decent standard.

Until the so-called Pulhoffer judgment, a succession of legal cases favoured reading "reasonable" or "appropriate" with "accommodation" in both the intial definition of homelessness and the definition of the local authority's duty to the homeless. The major thrust of the law was clearly that Parliament was determined that families in real and genuine housing need should be helped by their local authority.

In February of this year, the House of Lords judgment in Regina *v.* London Borough of Hillingdon—Ex parte Pulhoffer considerably changed the interpretation that had previously been placed upon that responsibility. In the Pulhoffer case it was decided that as the legislation did not include the words "reasonable" or "appropriate", they should not be read into it. Accommodation could be statutorily overcrowded, unfit or entirely unsuitable for some other reason, but it did not thereby cease to be accommodation. Lord Brightman said that there were no rules.

We are in a Diogenes barrel. As an erstwhile judge decided, a veritable pigsty would have counted as relevant, proper and reasonable accommodation.

Shelter and other housing groups were very concerned about that, and their concern increased when evidence started to come in that several local authorities—I must be fair and say that it was not the overwhelming majority—were apparently changing their policies to give effect to the judgment and thus reducing the opportunity for people in bad housing conditions to be properly rehoused.

Together with hon. Members from all parties, I tabled an early-day motion drawing attention to this matter, and currently it has 76 signatures. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) and I visited the former Under-Secretary in July and expressed our concern about the matter.

Last week in another place, their Lordships saw fit, against the Government's advice, to carry an amendment drafted by Shelter. I do not wish to go into enormous detail about the amendment as it would be unfair to the House to do so. Subsections (2) and (3) tackle, in each case, the two areas which most concern us about the effects of the original Pulhoffer judgment.

It is important to stress that the amendment can in no way extend the rights of homeless persons. It simply restores the position to what it was before the judgment in the House of Lords. The housing pronouncements of my hon. Friend the Minister are attracting great interest. He may have been advised that last week I even expressed a word of congratulation during Prime Minister's Question Time. I congratulate him on the steps he is taking.

I emphasise that the ability of local authorities to meet these responsibilities, particularly in areas of high housing stress, is dependent upon some change in the

Government's attitude to investment in housing. I welcome my hon. Friend's comments in that respect, particularly about the necessity to do something about the phasing out of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families. I look forward to his proposals in two weeks' time in that respect. Above all, I urge acceptance of the amendment and trust that the Government will accept it.

Mr. John Fraser: The amendment is a Labour victory. I do not wish to detract from anything said by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire). I am glad that he spoke in favour of the amendment which was passed in another place. Until a few days ago, the Government resisted this amendment. Their spokesman in the other place described it as premature. I am glad that, at a late stage, they had the grace to accept it. I agree with the hon. Member for Hornchurch. The measure returns the law to what we always thought it was. First, a person is homeless if he or she lives in outrageously unsatisfactory accommodation. Secondly, a local authority will have a duty under the homeless persons legislation to provide homeless persons with not only, literally, a roof over their heads but reasonable accommodation in which they will be reasonably secure. Therefore, we welcome the late acceptance of what has been called the Pulhoffer amendment. The amendment will be passed now that it has the Government's support.

We must recognise that the homelessness problem is the rotten, inhumane consequence of the Government's housing policy. It is not a mere accident from which the Government can divorce themselves. It is the result of the Government's repressive attitude towards local authority housing construction and rented housing. The words "crisis" and "catastrophe" are often over-used but I do not think that they are over-used when applied to the problem of homelessness in the United Kingdom, particularly in London. Figures published only this morning by the Association of London Authorities gave some idea of present and future homelessness in the capital. The Association of London Authorities comprises only 16 of the 32 London boroughs, so the figures that I shall give are a gross underestimate of the extent of homelessness in the capital.

In March 1986, 3,558 homeless families had to be supplied with bed and breakfast accommodation. By August 1986, the number had increased to 4,742. The Association of London Authorities forecasts that by March 1988 the total number of homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation will reach 9,138 in the 50 per cent. of boroughs that it represents. The association predicts that the number will increase by a further third by March 1989. Some 12,637 homeless families will be in bed and breakfast accommodation at enormous expense to the ratepayer and divorced from any kind of permanent attachment to their homes. That is a disgraceful figure. If it is projected to the whole of London, it would not be unreasonable to estimate that in 1989 20,000 families will be in bed and breakfast accommodation. If one includes single homeless people living rough or in grossly unsatisfactory accommodation, there could be about 40,000 units without any kind of permanent shelter in our capital city. That could be nothing but a disgrace and a reflection on the Government's housing policy.

The bed and breakfast homeless are only the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, the homeless figure is only the tip of the iceberg. The number of people accepted as being homeless rose from 50,000 a year in 1979 to 100,000 a year at present, and even that is an underestimate of the grave housing need in this country. We must not only look to the redefinition of the legal duties of local authorities but recognise the full extent of homelessness, especially bed and breakfast homelessness.

Last Monday, I talked to the new leader of Lambeth borough council, Councillor Linda Bellos, who told me that the cost of providing bed and breakfast accommodation for 362 families in Lambeth alone—my borough—is sufficient to underwrite the building of 1,000 new homes a year. Homelessness, especially bed and breakfast homelessness, affects ethnic minorities very harshly. I am sometimes told off for using the expression "ethnic minorities". I am told that "black" is the right word to use in some places. Ninety per cent. of the homeless in bed and breakfast accommodation are black or of Asian extraction.

More resources must be allocated to housing. At Prime Minister's Question Time last week, the Prime Minister boasted that the Government had built one million homes since she came to office. She went so far as to say that that was the largest number of homes ever built in an equal period. If that is what she meant to say, it is what Londoners would call a pork pie. If she had continued building at the rate which prevailed under the Labour Government, at least 1·5 million homes would have been built since 1979. There must be a restoration of Labour's housing resources.

The Government have to drive home to some local authorities the seriousness with which they must take their housing responsibilities to the homeless. It is not insignificant that the name of the case that we are debating is Pulhoffer *v.* London borough of Hillingdon, a borough which seems to believe that one should draw a cordon—I am not sure whether it is a cordon sanitaire or a cordon doctrinaire — around the pools of homelessness in London. At present—I have checked this—Hillingdon borough council is a hung council. When it was controlled by the Conservative party, it held the homeless and its housing responsibilities in such contempt that it did not even bother to send homelessness statistics, house building statistics or any other kind of housing statistics to the Department of the Environment. The Minister does not know what is going on in Hillingdon because the borough council is not prepared to provide him with information.

I am sorry to talk so much about London, but I do so because we were provided with some London figures this morning. We must treat London and the other conurbations as single strategic areas in which to deal with the problems of housing and homelessness. One cannot simply divide the capital city or other large urban areas into segments in which some local authorities discard their housing responsibilities altogether while others such as Lambeth, Southwark and Birmingham take their responsibilities seriously.

7.30 pm

I hope that as a consequence of the reversal of the decision in Pulhoffer v. London borough of Hillingdon the Minister will look carefully at the operation of policies in boroughs such as Hillingdon and elsewhere, where local authorities neglect their responsibilities to the most vulnerable in the housing market. I hope not only that there will be a change or a re-clarification in the law, but

[Mr. John Fraser]

that more resources will be devoted to housing. I hope that there will be a purge by the Department of the Environment on local authorities that callously disregard their housing responsibilities, and that the Minister will take that seriously.

As I go around the country I come across housing authorities, some of which are quite small, which have never before known the problem of putting homeless families into bed and breakfast accommodation. Gravesham is one of those councils. Medway is another, where the local council demolished 400 homes, blowing them up in a sort of celebration of doctrinaire anti-housing ideology. Many local authorities, which have never before known the problem, are now having to place homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation. The Government's policy is coming home to roost. We should regard the amendment not just as a clarification of the law, but as a challenge to reallocate resources to badly needed homes.

Mr. Cartwright: Like other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I welcome the Government's acceptance of the amendment carried in another place. However, I agree with the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) that it will not solve the problems of homelessness. Every day of our lives those of us who represent inner London constituencies are made all too aware of the problem.

I should like to deal with the concluding point of the hon. Member for Norwood. The London borough of Greenwich, in which I live and which I represent, has always been a rather strange London borough in that it has never been a housing stress area. Therefore, in the past we have never had the problems of bed and breakfast accommodation, and we have not had a major problem with homelessness. However, we have that problem today, and about 40 per cent. of all the vacant property in the borough goes to homeless families. If we add the problems of the break-up of relationships and the need to decant for major renovations in local authority housing, we find that virtually no families are being housed and taken off the waiting lists because of the overriding priority that must be given to genuinely homeless families. That means that our waiting list continues to be about 15,000. It also means that we must face the problem of people having absolutely no hope of being housed by the local authority. For example, there are about 200 cases of husbands and wives living apart. They can no longer look forward to the priority that they had in easier times, when they could be virtually guaranteed local authority housing. There are no longer any hard-to-let properties because the depth of the housing problem means that they are taken by people in serious need.

As other hon. Members have said, the figures are bad enough on the basis of those accepted under the legislation as being genuinely homeless. The young single homeless are a non-priority group who in the past have been regarded as a central London problem—young people attracted by the bright lights to the centre of the city. It is no longer only a central London problem. It is an unusual Friday evening if I do not see at my advice service a young person who is utterly homeless, moving around from one friend's home to another, sleeping on the floors of relatives' homes, sometimes sleeping in cars and sometimes sleeping rough.

Sometimes young people are homeless because they have fallen out with their families. The lifestyles simply do not gel and the parents have to face an awful choice—they cannot have the kid in the family because it is causing so much trouble, but they know that if they put the kid out he or she will be homeless. That is an awful decision for a parent to have to take, but I meet it all too often in my constituency. Sometimes a young person is homeless because the family has simply moved away, having decided to go back to the West Country, to the north or to Ireland or to retire away from London. That leaves 18, 19 or 20-year-olds high and dry because all their friends and their jobs are in London and they have nowhere to live. It is almost impossible to overemphasise the problem of homelessness now afflicting areas that never had difficulties in the past.

Another problem about homelessness is the lack of choice that we are forced to present to homeless families. The "one offer" situation is a heaven sent opportunity for a local authority to get rid of property at which other people turn up their noses because of its condition or its location, and it is no longer confined within one borough boundary. I am finding increasingly that homeless families are rehoused in my constituency and in my borough, miles away from their home towns—for example, people from Croydon who have no connection with my constituency. They have no friends, relations or other contacts in my constituency but because the London borough of Croydon says, "There is only one offer—we can get you housed in Greenwich and if you do not go there we shall have nothing more to do with you", they are forced to accept housing in an area that is entirely alien to them. That causes all sorts of difficulties for social and family life.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): A dilemma faces a housing authority as to whether it encourages—and in certain cases it does encourage—the break-up of a family by making it too easy for children to leave their parents, wives to leave their husbands or husbands to leave their wives. How many cases has the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) come across where the boy, the wife or the husband has been genuinely without a home?

Mr. Cartwright: I have come across far too many cases where those people genuinely have nowhere to go. If the hon. Gentleman is saying to me that it is not self-evident that break-up of relationship cases, as they are called in the trade—where husbands and wives part company, or where people who are living together in some sort of relationship part company—should have priority over people on the ordinary waiting list, I have much sympathy with that point of view.

However, that was not really the point that I was making. I was talking about the difficulties of young people in particular who are left high and dry with nowhere to live. I was making a point about young married couples starting out in life who have nowhere to live, other than a home with one lot of parents or the other. That is a dreadful way to try to start married life in 1986; having to make occasional visits to be able to sleep with each other is a singularly unpleasant way in which to begin married life. Unfortunately, that is what is happening in inner London at the moment.

In conclusion, I urge the Minister to take notice of that sort of situation. I join the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) who paid tribute to the new thinking that we have already seen from the Minister since he took on his present office. Many of his ideas are worth all-party consideration, if not support. I hope that he comes to terms with the extent of the problem of homelessness in our great cities, especially in inner London, because it is one of the most important social problems now facing us.

Mr. John Patten: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) for his concluding remarks. Tonight is not the night, and I suspect you would not allow it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a full-blown debate on homelessness in all its aspects. I shall not seek to make a major speech of some length on the matter, and I see Mr. Deputy Speaker nodding firmly as I say that.

I take on board the comments of the hon. Members for Woolwich and for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), and also the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) who moved acceptance of the amendment. I am grateful to him for that. In any debate on homelessness we have to recognise that other things have happened in this country since 1979 besides there having been a Conservative Government since then. Major changes have taken place in our social structure. Far more people are asking for divorces. I understand that there were 179,000 in 1985, which is a huge increase on, say, 10 years before. There is considerable all-party support for trying to do something more, if we can, to fill empty homes, whether owned publicly or privately. We could all do much on that matter. We need to do something to make sure that Hillingdon gives us statistics. I shall turn my attention to that.

When the hon. Member for Norwood spoke, I thought that he was speaking about a Labour-controlled council because councils change hands, and I believe that Hillingdon has changed hands recently. I take as my source a report that I read in *The Independent*, so it must be accurate and true, that about two Thursdays ago the Labour chairman of housing announced the opening of a new housing development near London airport, and said that there should be far more mixed tenure estates. Many of us on both sides of the House could have written those words. I forget whether the chairman was announcing plans or opening the development, but he said that he did not want to see any more monolithic council estates, but he wanted multi-tenure estates.

On that basis, when I approach Hillingdon, rather than a delinquent Tory authority — Heaven forfend! — I should be approaching an authority under Labour or alliance control. However, I shall look into what the hon. Member for Norwood said. I shall do all that I can to bring about what he wants if he, as a quid pro quo, offers to approach, with me, the London borough of Camden, which refuses, persistently and continually, to return the statistics that we ask for. I know that I can look for support on that.

Mr. John Fraser: If people do not make returns of business statistics, many of them are prosecuted. I have no hesitation in saying that there should be an absolute duty on local authorities to supply the information that is essential for us to make policy decisions, irrespective of political control.

Mr. Patten: We are at one on that.

I listened with interest to what my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch said about the amendment, and I congratulate him on the way in which he spoke to it. I recognise the strength of feeling that there has been on the matter. That is why we are prepared to accept the amendment, but I do so with the proviso that we shall continue our monitoring exercises of the effects of the judgment on local authorities, through our postal survey of all authorities' practices in operating the Act. Likewise, we have an invitation outstanding to all voluntary bodies to submit to us any further evidence that they consider appropriate from their contacts in the housing advice network. At the end of the day, we shall consider the results in relation to how the amendment works in practice. We shall not hesitate to return to the House with proposals for further amendments to those parts of the Act if that seems appropriate. However, we are content to accept the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 11

HOUSING MANAGEMENT GRANTS

Lords amendments Nos. 41 to 46 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

New Clause

MATTERS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN DETERMINING FAIR RENT

Lords amendment No. 47 agreed to.

New Clause

FURTHER PROVISIONS WITH RESPECT TO SHARED OWNERSHIP LEASES

Lords amendment: No. 48, after clause 11, insert

"The provisions of Schedule *(Further provisions with respect to shared ownership leases)* have effect to exclude certain shared ownership leases from the operation of the provisions of—

(a) the Rent Act 1977 and the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976, and

(b) Part I of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 (right of long leaseholder to enfranchisement or extension of lease)."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 186.

7.45 pm

Mr. John Fraser: Amendment No. 48 and the associated schedule take shared ownership leases out of the protection of the Rent Act. As I understand it, they have never had the protection of the Rent Act, so the provision is declaratory to help building societies that have doubts about whether they are affected by the Act. A private landlord cannot grant a shared ownership lease, effectively because of the operation of the Rent Act. Such leases can be granted only where the landlord could create a secure tenancy, but shared ownership leases are defined in the Housing Act 1985 as not being secure tenancies. I should like to make one query. I cannot find any reference to the determination of the major rent element under a shared ownership tenancy, under fair rent procedures. I understand that with local authorities the rental element

[Mr. John Fraser]

under the shared ownership lease is determined by the local authority. That is not right, because it is far too open to abuse. Be that as it may, it has to be comparable with other rents charged by the local authority, so there is a standard of comparison.

I cannot find any reference to the fair rent being determined for a shared ownership housing association shared ownership lease. It is important to have the assurance that the tenant can look to that arrangement for two reasons — first, so that the tenant under a shared ownership lease is not overcharged the rent element and, secondly, so that there is an element in the rent on which the tenant can apply for housing benefit. Normally the rental element under the lease is eligible for housing benefit, if, for instance, the tenant has a low income or becomes unemployed. Will the Minister give me an assurance on that?

Mr. Simon Hughes: I underline and endorse the valid request that has been made by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser).

I do not know whether the Minister can give answers immediately, but there appears to be a form of tenure that falls outside the protection that I should have thought he would accept people need so that they know that they have security of financial planning if they go into what for many of them will be a new form of shared ownership. We welcome the form of ownership, but there does not seem to be the ring fencing in the protection that they would otherwise get in rent control.

Mr. John Patten: I hope that what I shall say will reassure the hon. Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

Neither the Rent Act nor the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 was drafted with the possibility of shared ownership in mind. Shared ownership was not around when they were drafted. To a certain extent, that is that. The protection and the rights that those Acts confer on tenants are, for the most part, not relevant or not appropriate to shared owners. The hon. Member for Norwood, with his legal expertise on housing issues, will appreciate that, I am sure.

The measures that we have introduced in the Bill were explicitly welcomed by the National Federation of Housing Associations and the Housing Corporation. Indeed, I was subject to heavy lobbying by those bodies. They regard the moves that we are making as necessary. They will enable housing associations to expand their shared ownership activities by offering privately financed schemes in addition to publicly subsidised schemes.

Under the Bill, the shared owner has to be offered a long lease with a minimum 99-year term, so he or she does not need Rent Act security, nor is the Rent Act necessary to ensure that shared ownership rents are kept under effective control. Let me explain. With a shared ownership lease, the shared owner will know from the outset what his or her rent will be and how it will be reviewed because it will have to be set out in the lease that the prospective tenant has to decide whether to sign. There has been the closest consultation with the Housing Corporation, which wants the changes to be made so that they have more money for their activities.

Furthermore, those offering shared ownership will have every incentive to keep the rent as low as possible to make the overall cost competitive with outright owner occupation; otherwise there is no point in the building society and housing association involved going into the business at all. Unless they keep the rent low, no one will be remotely interested in shared ownership. People would be mad to go into it; they would be better to buy outright. Therefore, all the commercial pressures, even though they are within a carefully constrained and generally institutional framework with building societies and housing associations, are to keep the rents as low as possible.

With the recent availability of funding from the building societies on index-linked terms — it is those terms which will make the schemes go — the cost to the shared owner of the rented share will be low at the start and should not be much higher than it would be under a fair rent. However, it will not necessarily be exactly the same as the fair rent. Therefore, there is an inbuilt safeguard on rents, and our proposals contain other safeguards to protect the position of shared owners. It is only future shared owners who will be excluded from the Rent Acts in that way. It will be only those who decide that they cannot afford or do not wish to buy but wish to take advantage of the scheme operated by a housing association with building society finance because that suits their circumstances. Existing shared owners who have the right to have a fair rent registered will retain that right. I give that pledge to the House. Furthermore, the lease must be granted by housing associations, which are non-profit-making organisations. I am not sure what else we can do to guarantee the position of tenants because the inbuilt drive must be for the housing association, investing institutions and others to keep the rented portion at the lowest possible level; otherwise they will not be in business.

Mr. John Fraser: People want to know the criteria that will have to be followed for increasing the initial rent. If it is to be removed from the control of the rent officer, who will control it?

Mr. Patten: The timing of the rent reviews will be set out in the lease, which will be for 99 years. This is a new hybrid form of mixed tenure occupation, part-owned, part-rented. All the way through, it must be incumbent on the lending institutions and housing associations involved, which are non-profit making, to keep the rent down to a reasonable level.

Finally, there is a safeguard that the leases will have to comply with prescribed conditions which define precisely the sort of shared ownership arrangements which will be permitted to operate outside the present legislative controls. Senores priores.

Mr. Fraser: We are told that there will be regular rent reviews in the lease. However, we want to know the formula by which the rent will be increased. We understand the formula at the moment because the rent is fixed by the rent officer. However, if the rent to be paid under the shared ownership lease is linked to an index-linked mortage from a building society, that may provide the formula. The point about Rent Act protection for tenants is that in a situation of desperate housing shortage people sometimes sign documents which they may afterwards judge to be unwise. It is for the House to intervene and protect people. That is why we want to know what the formula will be.

Mr. Patten: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention. It is important to get this clear. I thought that I had made it clear in Committee. I apologise for not doing so. Index linking provides a formula, and the concept of shared ownership provides an in-built safeguard because no one would wish to put the rents up to more than a reasonable level. Otherwise shared ownership would not take off. The biggest safeguard is provided by the housing associations which will be operating the schemes. I cannot imagine a housing association wishing to let anyone into a shared ownership scheme, funded from whatever source, whom they thought did not fully understand what he was doing. We are dealing with someone who is not a tenant, but only partly a tenant. We are dealing with someone who has decided to go into a scheme involving part-ownership and part-tenancy. I think that we are chasing a red herring.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I accept the points made by the Minister about the automatic control mechanisms within that sector. He knows that I and my colleagues welcome the expansion of shared ownership. We have argued for that for many years. It would be helpful, so that we can see how things develop, if, within the Department and its requests to local authorities, backed up by enforcement if necessary, we do the same sort of monitoring as the Minister wants in relation to homelessness. In that way we will be able to see the pace of growth, the proportion of rent increases and other variables as they develop and as the sector grows. It will be a new development for many people, and it is important that the House and the Government watch it carefully so that we can learn from experience.

Mr. Patten: I do not think that I can give any assurances other than that we will monitor what we do with the housing association movement. The House exists, as the hon. Member for Norwood was implying, to ensure that the undreamable does not turn out to be true. However, I cannot imagine how a combination of the Abbey National and North housing would wish, under any circumstances, to affect adversely the tenants in the rented part of shared ownership schemes. I hope that the House will accept my assurances.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

EXTENSION OF PERMITTED OBJECTS OF REGISTERED HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Lords amendment: No. 49, after clause 11, insert the following new clause—

. In section 4 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 (eligibility for registration), in subsection (3) (permissible additional purposes or objects of association), after paragraph *(d)* insert—

"*(dd)* providing services of any description for owners or occupiers of houses in arranging or carrying out works of maintenance, repair or improvement, or encouraging or facilitating the carrying out of such works;".

Read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to consider amendments (a) and (b) to the amendment.

Mr. John Fraser: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, in line 8, after "houses" to insert "or land on which houses are constructed".

I welcome the amendment to housing association powers introduced in the other place because many housing associations undertake other activities. They not only develop and build homes but often assist daughter associations, or, in a less sexist way, issue associations with other housing schemes. For instance, there are many charitable housing associations which are not permitted by their rules to undertake what are called improvement for sale schemes funded by the Housing Corporation and some of the banks. Therefore, they have to form a non-charitable housing association to undertake that work.

However, in practice, the charity provides many of the services to the non-charitable housing association. That is quite right, although they have to go through some convoluted exercises in order to provide their services. Instead of providing services directly, they often have to enter into staff-sharing agreements so that the charitable housing association can assist the non-charitable. In other cases a housing association, whether charitable or not, may want to provide services to the owners of property which by present rules it may not be permitted to do.

We welcome the fact that the amendment widens the powers of housing associations. However, there are two limitations to which my amendments refer. Although the Government are permitting housing associations to provide services to the owners of other houses, there are many circumstances where a housing association assists a developer who is not yet the owner of the house. It may be that one association with a great body of expertise, some architectural staff and a good deal of experience helps a smaller housing association to develop land. I should like the powers of housing associations to be extended to what seems to be a sensible ambit of their activity.

The second problem is the extent to which a charitable housing association is able to undertake non-charitable work for other people. For example, a charitable housing association has an associate non-charitable association which does improvement-for-sale work. The other association is not a house owner but may be the owner of a site. I want the charity to be able to provide services as long as the provision of those services is subsidiary to the charitable objectives of the charitable housing association and to its benefit.

I know that the Housing Corporation had to issue a long circular recently advising housing associations about what they may or may not do. To my mind, a further minor amendment to the law would make life much simpler and allow housing associations, charitable and non-charitable, to continue with the sort of work that enables them to fill gaps in their flow of work and to provide work for their staff. I hope that the Government will further expand the activities of such organisations without subverting the main objectives.

8 pm

Mr. Tracey: I do not think that I can satisfy the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser). I am not sure whether his amendments are intended to be probing amendents or whether he expects satisfaction. The new clause extends the category of permissible objectives for registered housing associations to include agency services or services designed to provide home owners or occupiers with practical help or encouragement with their home improvements or repairs.

[Mr. Tracey]

At present, housing associations are able to provide such services only by setting up separately constituted bodies, which is both restrictive and expensive. The measure will facilitate the provision of improvement and repair services to owners and occupiers and give effect to an undertaking in last year's Green Paper on home improvement policy. Individual housing associations will have to decide whether to offer such services and how to finance them.

The Housing Corporation and the National Federation of Housing Associations were consulted about the Lords amendment and are content with it. The hon. Member for Norwood attempts to push further. The amendment has attracted wide support from the voluntary sector and was welcomed by all sides when it was introduced in another place.

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment would put a question mark over the main amendment. Someone who owned land on which a house had yet to be built would not normally wish to do maintenance, repair or improvement work. It is difficult to understand how the suggestion would work.

Amendment (b) to Lords amendment No. 49 is intended to enable charitable housing associations to provide agency services. If a housing association is a registered charity, there is no restriction on its authority to render services to the public in accordance with its charitable objective. It would, therefore, be free to provide agency services. If the hon. Gentleman wants to push further, I am afraid that we cannot satisfy him. However, we take note of what he says. Lords amendment No. 49 is needed and I hope that the House will agree to it.

Amendment to the Lords amendment negatived.

Question, That the Lords amendment be made, *put and agreed to.*

New Clause

DISPOSAL OF DWELLINGS IN NEW TOWNS.

Lords amendment: No. 50, insert the following new clause

"(1) Part III of the New Towns Act 1981 (transfer of new town housing to district councils) is amended as follows.

(2) After section 57 insert

Savings for other powers of disposal

57A. The provisions of this Part as to the transfer of dwellings in a new town to a district council shall not be construed as restricting—

(a) the power of the Commission under section 36 above,

(b) the power of a development corporation under section 64 below, or

(c) the power of the Development Board for Rural Wales under section 4 of the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976,

to dispose of such dwellings to any person.".

(3) The following provisions (which relate to the initiation of consultations with a view to the transfer of new town housing to a district council) are repealed—

section 43(3) and (4),

section 49*(b)* and *(c)*."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, in line 5, after '57A', insert, 'subject to the provisions of 57B below,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments (b), (c) and (d) thereto.

Mr. Hughes: The amendments deal with the disposal of housing held by the new town corporations, the Housing Corporation or the Development Board for Rural Wales. At present, if there is a disposal of such housing from the new town to a local authority, consultation takes place. However, the proposed Lords amendment allows disposal to other than local councils. This is not a matter of principle but the Lords amendment allows disposal to a housing association or to a private owner. The disposal could be of a single property, a couple of properties or all the properties on an estate.

The amendments to the Lords amendment cover the same issue. We suggest that there must be consultation about the disposal of properties by new towns, as there is in relation to disposals of properties by other authorities. My amendment provides for consultation and for a majority vote by those whose properties are to be disposed of.

Some local authorities which cover the new towns — for example, Milton Keynes, Basildon and Telford — have planned their housing provision on the basis that they will receive housing transfers from a new town corporation. They believe that it is right and fair, both for them as prospective inheritors of the housing stock and for the tenants of the new town corporation, for a consultation procedure to be set out.

I hope that the Minister will recognise that the words in my amendment were drafted by his Department. The words fit the circumstances, but they come from amendments discussed in another place in relation to consultation elsewhere. I hope that the Minister will not, therefore, object in principle to the words or the drafting. I hope that he will not object to the principle involved. If people have been public sector tenants, although of a different type from those who have held local authority tenancies, they should be fully consulted about every scheme that might result in the disposal of their property's freehold.

The new town authorities which are to be wound up will want to dispose of estates, parts of them, or individual dwellings, to a range of different authorities, so different consultation procedures will be necessary. However, it cannot be beyond the wit of authorities to work out ways of ensuring that consultation works properly. I press upon the Minister the importance of consultation when it is proposed that tenants' landlords be changed. That consultation process should be the same as has been accepted in other contexts. The tenants should be consulted and the decision should be made by a majority. I hope that the amendments that I have tabled, or others to the same effect, will be accepted by the Minister in one form or another. Many people are affected, and are anxious to have a say in their future.

Mr. Warren Hawksley (The Wrekin): The Wrekin includes Telford, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I support and welcome Lords amendment No. 50 as being

a move in the right direction. However, I am unable to support the Labour or Liberal amendments, which go further than is necessary.

My constituents will be greatly affected by what is decided. In my constituency there is a housing stock of 10,000 houses which are currently owned by Telford development corporation. If all those houses were to go to the Wrekin district council, its stock would be doubled, and it could not cope with the houses it would receive. I receive many complaints about how the district council maintains its houses and about the repair services that it offers to my constituents. I receive much more favourable comments from the tenants involved in the Telford development corporation.

It is undesirable that any large holding should be built up in one area. Wrekin district council's housing stock would be doubled if it received the extra houses. The greater the choice, the better. I and many of my constituents look forward to the Government giving tenants a choice of housing associations, housing co-operatives, housing trusts or the district council following the demise of the development corporation.

I agree with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that the tenants should be consulted. From my discussions with the Department I gained the impression that such consultation would take place. We may disagree about whether the results of that consultation should be binding on the Government, but I hope that consultation will take place, and that the Minister will listen. The Labour amendment suggests that there will be one solution. But I hope that there will be a variety of solutions. Some estates may decide to go to housing associations, housing co-operatives or trusts.

If consultation takes place and an estate decides that it wishes to remain with the council while another decides that it wants to go with a housing corporation or housing association, I hope that the Minister will look favourably upon those decisions. But until that consultation has taken place, it would be wrong of the Government to give any such commitment. That is not the only matter which must be taken into consideration when making a final decision.

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with three questions of a local nature affecting the Telford area. When will consultation take place? I know that consultation with the corporation and the district council was planned. It was held, possibly to allow this amendment to be passed. But I hope that the Minister can give some idea of when Telford's consultative procedure with the tenants will take place. What safeguards are there — the local government legislation that has already been passed may come into this — to ensure that the Wrekin district council does not spend much taxpayers' or ratepayers' money in running a campaign to try to push the view that it wants as many houses as it can obtain? Discussion with tenants should be balanced. I am nervous, because only last week the district council had a half-page advertisement in the *Shropshire Star* about bussing and deregulation, suggesting that the Government were at fault. It can still get away with that. The district council seems to get away with using public money to advertise a political point. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can assure us that no public money will be used for a campaign by the Wrekin district council to try to grab the available housing stock.

Who will decide how the consultation should be worded? We all know that the way in which a public opinion poll is worded is very relevant.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman clearly has an important constituency interest. The questions in my longer amendment are meant to allay just those anxieties. Are they the type of questions that should be answered? They come from the Department's draft elsewhere in the Bill, and I believe that they should be part of the consultation. Perhaps the formula could at least be adopted, even if the amendment is not.

8.15 pm

Mr. Hawksley: I hope that there will be a fair representation of the case. If a housing association, housing co-operative, a trust or the district council could be an option, the wording of the questions should be approved by the Secretary of State, and it should be in a brief form that gives the tenants all the information that they need. They must have certain information. I accept that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) may be right to be more specific about that, but I have confidence in my hon. Friend the Minister that the question will be asked correctly. I am asking my hon. Friend for an assurance that that will happen. I hope that it will happen, because it is important that it should.

I also hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can assure the tenants of Telford development corporation that they have the option of being kept out of the clutches — as they see it — of the rather Left-wing Wrekin district council. The majority of them do not want a relationship with the district council

Mr. Rooker: Left wing?

Mr. Hawksley: I accept that it is all comparative but there are four members of the Militant Tendency on the Wrekin district council who were suspended by the local Labour party. They were kicked out of the Labour party. They appealed to the national executive committee, and were reinstated. They could be landlords for my constituents, who are at the moment tenants of Telford development corporation. They are worried about coming under such Left-wing control. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure my constituents that they will get a fair deal from the legislation.

Mr. Rooker: I jest with the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley), but at least the people of The Wrekin will have the satisfaction of knowing that Bruce Grocott will be their Member of Parliament after the next election.

I heard the hon. Gentleman dismiss my amendments and those of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), but I could not quite follow his argument. I do not understand how he could disagree with amendment (c), because all it does is to accept everything in the Government's amendment. It states:

"chosen by a secret ballot of tenants, and such ballot to include the option of the local authority, if the authority so desires."

Some authorities are not interested in receiving more houses. I am the last person in the world to force more housing on to local authorities. Consequently, I do not understand why the hon. Member for The Wrekin should dismiss the amendments, especially as the tenor of his speech seemed to support them.

[Mr. Rooker]

It is important for us to pause at this point, because we have new material which was not mooted when the Bill first went through the House. However, the Minister gave me notice on the last day of July that some changes in this direction would be made in the other place. Local authorities have three main anxieties about this legislation, in the sense that they feel that they have already made plans and are in the process of taking over the ownership of the stock.

I must make it clear at the outset that the Labour party believes that the tenants should decide, not the local authority or the development corporation. We do not disagree with the reversal of the proposals in the new towns legislation. The Labour party will give local authority tenants the right to take over the management of their housing. It naturally follows that where a development corporation is being wound down, it makes no sense to transfer without question to the local authority when we would then give the tenants the chance to transfer out. The object is to give the choice at the time of the transfer. The tenants must decide.

That said, Milton Keynes and The Wrekin are important, because at present the local authority is managing the new town development corporation housing, but it is doing so with seconded staff.

Mr. Hawksley: The Telford development corporation is still in existence, and we hope that the transfer of the housing stock to another owner will take place before the demise of the corporation.

Mr. Rooker: I am sorry, I did not say that. The management of the development corporation stock is carried out by the council on an agency basis. It does not own it and it has not been transferred. The same applies to Milton Keynes.

The case that I want to highlight — I have given the Minister notice of this — is Peterborough. Peterborough is in a different position from The Wrekin and Milton Keynes. The difficulty with Peterborough is that it is not only managing the housing stock on behalf of the new town corporation, but it is doing so with its own staff. It has an agreement, voluntarily entered into, with the housing corporation that it will be taking over. I understand that there is a date, probably towards the end of next year, when the transition will be completed.

I have had some brief discussions with the director of housing in Peterborough, and I have a note saying that its management agency arrangement is not simply to manage dwellings, but to integrate the management practices and procedures and to assimilate all housing staff into a new city council housing department. The staff are not seconded; they are city council employees. There is a single housing management account for both authorities. I did not originally take that point on board. Therefore, the Peterborough situation is different from the others.

I make it clear that I have never been to Peterborough, but I have looked at its policy statement of objectives. There are many of them, but they contain the sentence:

"The council will not provide housing that councillors and officers would not happily live in themselves."

It is the first time that I have seen such a statement, and I should like to see that enshrined in every local authority's policy objectives. I might add that I would also include the architects and builders. Looking at its statement of objectives and the way that it operates, I do not think that Peterborough would give us cause for concern on this matter.

Nevertheless, the tenants should decide, as I have told the director of housing at Peterborough. The tenants must be asked where they want to go at the time of the changeover. The fact is that Peterborough is different. I ask the Minister to address his mind to that, so that the new town development corporation there does not feel under any obligation, as a result of the changes in the Bill, to tear up its voluntary agreements and go to the private sector or somewhere else because it is not interested in the local authority. If ever there was a case for accepting amendment (c) to give the local authority a chance to put its case to the tenants, it has to be Peterborough simply because of its interaction with staff and the accounts.

I stand to be corrected on the matter of the Telford development corporation — its Member of Parliament will clearly know more than I do — but I have read somewhere that management practices are carried out on an agency basis. If that is wrong, I withdraw it completely. I confess straight away that I have not been briefed by The Wrekin.

However, what I do have — not from The Wrekin but from a bundle of papers that must have been sent from the other place — is the result of a MORI poll to which the hon. Member for The Wrekin did not refer. I am as sceptical as anybody else about opinion polls, but this relates specifically to the matter that we are discussing and to housing. Therefore, some points must be put on record.

Two polls were conducted by MORI in July and August 1986 using a random sample of 1,109 council tenants and a random sample of 309 development corporation tenants. They were asked what they felt about their housing. In an independent poll of the new town tenants of Telford, 65 per cent. said that they would prefer their homes to be taken over by the council as part of a planned wind-up of the new town corporation. The second most popular choice was a housing association, which was favoured by 10 per cent. If those 10 per cent. want a housing association, that should be an option. They do not have to be dealt with in one block, as the hon. Gentleman said. Fourteen per cent. were unable to give an answer.

If that is a proper poll, conducted by a professional polling organisation, one cannot ignore the fact that 65 per cent. is a substantial vote in favour of the local authority, although, in the final analysis, it should be put to the test by a vote of everybody.

MORI also commissioned a poll of existing Wrekin council tenants. That showed that 71 per cent. thought the council did its best with the money available — more than in other parts of the country where MORI surveys have been conducted—for example, Harlow 60 per cent. and Birmingham 47 per cent. The majority of tenants were satisfied with the council's repairs and maintenance services. That shows a relatively high degree of satisfaction. However, that does not mean that I would propose treating the tenants of the new town like chattels and dumping them on the local authority without giving them a say. That would be unacceptable and not consistent with Labour party policy. It is not what we are proposing here tonight. We are proposing that there should be genuine consultation and that the local authorities should not be squeezed out.

Central Lancashire is different. There the local authority did not want to know, and that is fine. That gave the Government another way of looking at disposals. They had to because the local authority did not want to know. Local authorities may or may not be the best landlords for particular groups of new town tenants, but it should be for the tenants to decide. It would be wrong if, as a result of the amendments, the local authority was deliberately excluded from the choice. I have criticised large-scale public landlordism as much as anybody else, and I shall continue to do so because of the bureaucracy and remoteness that brings about. At the same time, as the tenants foot the bill through their rents, they should make the decision. The Government should bear in mind, because it is not clear from the amendments, first, today's debate — the hon. Member for The Wrekin has made similar points to my own and those of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey — and, secondly, that perhaps the other place should have a chance to look at the matter again. This is a probing amendment but we wish to hear something positive from the Minister about the tenants having a choice and some say in the disposal and the ownership of their homes.

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I shall be brief because I shall raise the matter tomorrow on the Adjournment.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) mentioned MORI opinion polls, and I note what he said about the position of my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley). We have had the same sort of nonsense in Basildon. The hon. Gentleman failed to mention the sums that are spent on conducting these polls and all the brainwashing in the build-up before them. Until last Thursday what was happening in Basildon was disgraceful. Last Thursday, Basildon became a hung council, so the chairman now has a casting vote. Both the Minister and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State have visited Basildon during the past year, and they will note with interest that the present chairman was the chairman of the housing committee when they visited Basildon.

8.30 pm

We have 16,000 new town commission properties which are under discussion. It was disgraceful how, until last Thursday, the local authority tried to frighten elderly people, for example, by saying that if the properties were handed over to a housing association, the housing association would not be prepared to repair them.

None of us should be concerned about the political posturing of the local authority. As the Member of Parliament for Basildon, in view of our many problems, I am concerned about who will best manage our public sector property.

Mr. John Patten: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and would add only that we must put the tenants' voice foremost. I entirely deplore the goings-on inside Basildon council and the attempts needlessly to frighten public sector housing tenants about their prospects. To say that X or Y would lead to repairs not being done is absurd, damaging and foolish. I condemn that utterly and hope that the council, under its new hung leadership — I do not approve of hung councils, but one changes one's mind from time to time — will have more common sense and that the people of Basildon will get what they want.

I greatly appreciated the welcome given by my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) to our amendment, and I thank him for it. He asked some specific questions and I shall try to answer them as best I can. Consultation will take place as soon as the responsible Minister has considered the form of the alternative solutions being worked out and has taken the decisions. I must reveal to the House that after recent ministerial changes the responsible Minister is me. I intend to write myself a short, sharp minute immediately I leave the Chamber, instructing myself to get on with the job of coming up with the alternatives as quickly as possible so that consultations can take place and uncertainty can be cleared up as quickly as possible.

How the questions are to be worded and who decides is something on which the Department is working. We shall work on the wording and agree the form before consultation takes place. I assure my hon. Friend that I take to heart his points about all sides of the case being made. It is critical that all sides have their voice heard, including the local authority. However, we hope that it will not exceed its normal activity in campaigning with the use of ratepayers' money. I have always thought of The Wrekin as rather a peaceful sort of place and the idea of its being stalked by Militants is a new and terrifying thought. I must tell Wrekin council that, where party politics are heavily subsidised by ratepayers, things go wrong. That happened in Thamesmead where political campaigning rebounded. People listened carefully to what was said on all sides, made up their minds and voted for the housing trust solution.

Amendment No. 50 introduces a new section into the New Towns Act 1981 and makes some repeals in that Act. It clarifies the position on the transfer of new town dwellings to bodies other than local authorities. On 25 March 1986 my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin, announced that the Government were prepared to consider proposals from the new town corporations for the transfer of that housing to bodies other than local authorities. We wish to ensure that there is a choice between a local authority and a non-local authority for the remaining new town housing and that that choice is not restricted by any provisions in the legislation concerning transfer to local authorities. The amendments prevent any such restriction and leave the new town bodies free to consider the disposal of new town dwellings to any person. That does not rule out the mixed solutions to which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referred. When one is dealing with 10,000 homes in which more than 20,000 people may be living, it is absurd to suggest that one blanket solution is right.

Some play was made by the Opposition in another place over the use of the word "person". It is being used in the technical, legal sense to mean an individual or a body of persons. I stress that we have not ruled out any particular form of non-part III arrangements for new town housing, such as the transfer to a housing association, or further part III schemes.

The four amendments to amendment No. 50 are in the names of the hon. Members for Perry Barr, for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Norwood (Mr. Fraser). I cannot commend them to the House but not merely because they are technically imperfect, which is always the problem with drafting amendments. The main

[Mr. John Patten]

objection is that they persist with a lopsided approach to the issue. Having heard hon. Members' speeches, I am sure that that was not the intent of the amendments.

The amendments as drafted impose a statutory requirement for consultation in general or ballots in particular in cases where the proposal is the transfer of new town houses to a non-council owner. They do not make a comparable provision for cases where the proposal is to transfer housing to the council — *[Interruption.]* I apologise if I am wrong, and I am sure that that is not the intention.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Clearly the intention of my amendment and, I think, of the amendment of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) is that all options should be put by the present landlords to public sector and other tenants, unrestricted in number. Therefore, the conduct of the consultation is in the hands, not of the local authority or anybody in the private sector, but of the present landlords. That is both express and implicit.

Mr. Patten: There is all-party agreement, and I apologise if I have misunderstood the amendments.

Mr. Rooker: I am sorry if there has been a misunderstanding. Lords amendment No. 50 refers to the disposal of dwellings to "any person". "Any person" can mean the local authority. The amendment seeks to insert "subject to the agreement of a majority of the tenants being obtained."

I would not be in favour of the matter going to the local authority unless the majority of tenants wanted that. That is clear. The amendment is not intended to be one sided.

Mr. Patten: Because of the use of the word "person", I may have misunderstood the purpose of both amendments and their drafting. The use of the word gave rise to much debate in the other place. I have already apologised for that, but none the less the amendments are technically imperfect and cannot be accepted. If we all agree that freedom of choice for tenants is to be our motif, then for the moment amendment No. 50, which introduces a new section into the New Towns Act 1981, does exactly that.

Mr. Hawksley: The confusion may arise because we do not know whether the Government take the view that the tenant's view should be binding. That is the question that arises.

Mr. Patten: We certainly take the view that we must consult fully with the tenants. Unless a situation arises in which there are a number of potential choices and tenants go off in relatively small groups in different directions, I cannot imagine that we will do anything other than accept the overall view.

I must refer again to the MORI opinion poll. I am sure it was properly taken because MORI is a reputable polling organisation. However, it was taken only on the basis of information that was available earlier this year when tenants did not have a proper set of alternatives in front of them. When the alternatives are properly put and the arguments properly advanced, I am willing to bet that we will find that tenants may well take a different view. On the other hand, they may not, because it may well be that in a new town area people are fond of the local authority form of management and may wish to stay with it. That is a choice that they can make.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr kindly gave me notice yesterday of the issue he wished to raise about Peterborough. If the new town housing were to be transferred to owners other than the council, I recognise that that might cause problems, especially for the staff. Some council staff could be made redundant and that would be a serious prospect for them. However, there are likely to be other opportunities for such staff with the new owners of the housing. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said in a written answer in March, the views of staff now managing new town housing will be taken into account before final decisions are reached on the future of the housing. That applies not just to Peterborough but to all other new towns.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr was right to raise the matter of agency agreements. It is an important issue and the terms of the agreement for the two councils which manage new towns housing, at Peterborough and Milton Keynes, will have to be reviewed most carefully.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister is quite right to say that amendment No. 50 commands widespread support in the House. I think he used the phrase that it leaves the choice to the tenants. I should like him to think about a future procedure which will allow him to use the authority that he has under the new towns legislation and elsewhere for a consultation process to include all the elements that have been voiced in the debate. I think that if it is correctly understood, that would have the consensus of the relative authorities. There might have been a misunderstanding because there was never any intention to create a lopsided bias. If tenants are to have a proper chance to exercise freedom of choice between future options for their landlords, they will benefit from a consultation process along the lines of the amendments proposed.

Question, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made, *put and negatived.*

Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 51 and 52 agreed to.

New Clause

DETERMINATION OF PRICE FOR LEASEHOLD ENFRANCHISEMENT

Lords amendment: No. 53, insert the following new clause—

".—(1) In section 9(1A) of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 (determination of price payable for enfranchisement of higher value houses), in paragraph *(a)* assumptions that vendor is selling subject to existing tenancy) after "no right to acquire the freehold" insert "or an extended lease and, where the tenancy has been extended under this Part of this Act, that the tenancy will terminate on the original term date.".

(2) In section 23(5) of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 (provisions as to tenancy granted in satisfaction of tenant's rights under Part I), in paragraph *(b)* (provisions which apply as if the tenancy were granted by way of extension) at the beginning insert "section 9(1) and (1A) above,".

(3) The above amendments apply where the tenant's notice under section 8 of the Leasehold Reform act 1967 (notice of desire to have the freehold) was given after the passing of this Act, notwithstanding that it was given before the commencement of this section, unless the price has by commencement been determined by agreement or otherwise."

Read a Second time.

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, as an amendment to Lords amendment No. 53, amendment (a), leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(3) The above amendments do not apply—

(a) where the price for enfranchisement has been determined, by agreement or otherwise, before the commencement of this section; or

(b) where the notice under section 8 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 (notice of desire to have the freehold) was given before the passing of this Act; or

(c) where notice under section 14 of that Act (notice of desire to have extended lease) was given before 5th March 1986.'.

This amendment fulfills the undertaking we gave that the Government would consider further the cut-off date after which the new valuation assumptions should apply to the enfranchisement of houses in the higher value bracket. The new clause was introduced into the Bill by my noble Friend Lord Coleraine and I am grateful to my noble Friend for his interest in the issue and for the advice that he has given me. The amendment provides that extension leases obtained by such leaseholders should be disregarded for the purposes of valuation under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. This dealt with the consequences of the Hickman case, which revealed that long leaseholders in the higher rateable value bracket could obtain significantly advantageous terms for enfranchisement if they first obtained an extension lease. At the time of the Housing and Building Control Bill a couple of years ago it was said that if a case was brought before the courts and the outcome revealed that there was a problem we would consider amending legislation. The amendment of the noble Lord Coleraine gives us that opportunity.

Much anxiety was expressed in the Lords about how to deal with transition cases. We acknowledge that leaseholders whose cases are far advanced ought not to be deprived of the benefit of the Hickman terms. In that context we moved an amendment to subsection (3) at Third Reading in another place which excluded any case where the application for enfranchisement was made after Royal Assent. A handful of leaseholders had applied to extend their leases in the expectation of being able to benefit from the Hickman terms and in advance of the ruling in the Court of Appeal. At least two of these cases are in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) who is in the Chamber. I pay tribute to his efforts on behalf of his constituents to ensure that such leaseholders are not disadvantaged. I know that our present amendment will deal with such cases by excluding cases from the new valuation terms if the leaseholder applied for an extension as a preliminary to enfranchisement on or before the date of the Court of Appeal ruling.

Amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 53 deals adequately with the problems presented by the Hickman case and I commend this approach to the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister will know that his colleagues in the other place were pressed by my noble Friend Lord Ezra, who sought a later cut-off date. On behalf of my noble Friend, I am grateful to the Government for this amendment because it fulfills the undertaking that was given in the other place. Some people, including my noble Friend Lord Ezra, think that it would have been possible for the date not to be 5 March 1986 but the date of the passing of the Act. It would appear that that view is tenable and proper. It was an alternative, but the Government have not accepted it. With the reservation that we would have preferred the date to be in a few days' time rather than a few weeks ago we welcome the amendment and the willingness of the Government to move in our direction.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I thank my hon. Friend for moving amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 53, introduced in the other place by Lord Coleraine. It was detected that in its original form the amendment would have retrospective effect. That fact was brought to my attention and it was also raised by a number of eloquent speakers in the other place, who made a convincing case for an amendment to the third subsection of the original amendment. I pay tribute to Lord Skelmersdale and Baroness Hooper, who gave this matter a great deal of their personal attention. They came forward with what is a satisfactory solution for the time being. I am most grateful to them for their work on this rather recondite and certainly difficult issue.

Justice is now being done for people who were being frustrated by long delays in the process of negotiations in pursuit of their statutory rights, which were confirmed by the Hickman judgment. Although my right hon. and hon. Friends have decided that they want to change the basis of the law and accept Lord Coleraine's amendment in principle, there is no doubt that my constituents and several others in similar circumstances were perfectly within the terms of the statute when they initiated their negotiations.

This incident touches on a matter which is fortunately of only limited application in practice, but it raises questions about valuation in the wider context of the purchase of property under the legal provisions enabling leasehold enfranchisement. Here, a means of dealing with a handful of hard cases which would have been created by the original amendment has been found. I welcome amendment (a) and hope that it will be accepted.

However, there are important issues in connection with valuation still remaining to be clarified, to which the House would have to return. I refer to the valuation of mansion blocks and substantial conversions. Amendment (a) also leaves the matter open with regard to the present state of the law affecting the anomalous status of holders of long leases in the highest rateable value properties, many of which are to be found in Kensington.

I hope that my noble Friends and my right hon. and hon. Friends will direct their minds to rectifying the quite unfair discrimination which still prevents a significant number of people from enjoying the benefits of home ownership for no clearly discernible reason. I hope that I shall have other opportunities to raise this matter in the coming Session.

8.45 pm

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): I welcome Lords amendment No. 53 and the Government's amendment (a).

In 1967, when some of us were addressing this problem elsewhere, we felt that the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, while giving a right, left something to be desired in terms of establishing a price. It was firm and clear in one virtue but left ground for disputation in an important part of the transaction—how much should be paid.

[Mr. John Mark Taylor]

We do well in the new clause to return to the problems and considerations of long leaseholders. Most people agree that we should, whenever possible, facilitate the enfranchisement of long leaseholders of dwelling houses and enable them to become freeholders. Consideration for long leaseholders of flats is long overdue. We have the Nugee report, and I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to proceed with it. He knows that there can be oppression and unfairness when responsibility for management services and the ownership of the freehold reversion are in the same hands and out of reach of leaseholders. I am sure that that will be his advice.

I urge the Government to deal with those problems and hope that, as far as possible, they will feel able to implement the Nugee recommendations. Many of my constituents in Solihull own long leases on flats and would like the Government to consider these matters soon and sympathetically.

Mr. John Fraser: We welcome Government amendment (a), which removes an undesirable aspect of retrospection from Lord Coleraine's amendment. Like many other people — but we did it first — we will be pressing for leasehold enfranchisement for flats in the next Session of Parliament.

Mr. John Patten: I wonder whether there will be opportunities in the next Session for these matters to be raised. We will have to wait to see what is in the Queen's Speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) is quite right to press me about the importance of doing something about Nugee, which received an all-party welcome in the House. We are intent on doing something about it as soon as possible. We look forward to my hon. Friend's advice. I know that, as my hon. Friend is a lawyer and an expert in local government as well as national government affairs, we shall benefit from his interest, which goes back to 1967. I welcome his support for amendment (a), just as I welcome the generalised support which it received from the hon. Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

I am sorry that we cannot be as accommodating of Lord Ezra as we would have liked. It is reasonable that leaseholders who sought to extend their leases many months ago as a prelude to enfranchisement, but who have been unable to complete negotiations, should have the benefit of the Hickman valuation terms. It would not be fair to freeholders, however, if leaseholders who submitted section 14 notices comparatively recently, following the considerable publicity that attended the Court of Appeal judgment on 4 March, should be able to benefit from the anomaly in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

Nevertheless, nobody could be more right than my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) when he said that this is a recondite subject. I have had to go up a fairly steep learning curve on this subject and I regard recondite as an understatement. When and if a Government Bill is brought forward, as we pledged, on the issues raised by Nugee, I do not doubt that my recondite studies will multiply through the night.

Amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 54 to 59 agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Clause 13

SIMPLIFIED PLANNING ZONES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Lords amendment: No. 60, in page 27, line 25, leave out from "scheme" to end of line 35.

Mr. Tracey: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 61 to 71, 71A, 72 to 77, 213 and 214.

Mr. Tracey: These amendments are designed to clarify certain points in the drafting of the simplified planning zone provisions of the Bill. Amendments Nos. 63, 66 to 69, 71A and 72 to 77 are more substantive than the others in the group.

An amendment to new section 24B(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act, inserted by clause 13, was agreed by the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) was of great assistance to the Government when simplified zones were discussed in Committee. He raised the point about any unfinished development being completed, and this amendment requires that any unfinished development should be completed to the local planning authority's satisfaction within 12 months of the SPZ scheme expiring. While we accept that some arrangements are required to reduce the risk that partially completed developments might be left for several years and that extant planning permission might be prone to exploitation, we have looked at the possibility of something more flexible than a fixed period for completion and something which bites on specific developments rather than provision that applies in a blanket fashion.

These amendments, which also apply to Scotland, therefore propose that permissions given by SPZ schemes should be brought into line with ordinary planning permissions. Under section 44 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, a local planning authority which is of the opinion that a development that has begun will not be completed within a reasonable period may serve a completion notice specifying a period of not less than 12 months at the end of which the permission will cease to have effect if the development is not completed.

The period of completion will be flexible to fit each case as appropriate, thus allowing the developer a reasonable period in which to complete his project. These are more practical and flexible arrangements than those in the Bill as it stands.

Amendments Nos. 60 to 62 and 70 to 71 ensure that an SPZ scheme cannot be used to impose greater planning restrictions on an area than would normally apply — in particular, for example, nullifying freedoms given by the general development and use classes orders. These amendments ensure also that, conversely, any freedoms given by an SPZ scheme permission cannot be negated by the terms of any other type of planning permission.

Amendments Nos. 64 and 65 and 72 and 73 clarify the provisions for the coming into effect of alterations to an existing SPZ scheme. They make it clear that an alteration that withdraws or relaxes conditions or extends the

permissions given by an SPZ scheme will take effect immediately if adopted by the local planning authority. However, an alteration that takes away permissions or imposes more restrictive conditions will not come into effect for 12 months.

Amendment No. 61 removes a superfluous reference in clause 13 to national parks authorities which will have no powers in relation to SPZs, and amendments Nos. 213 and 214 correct errors in the numbering of consequential provisions.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister, who said that the amendments were designed to clarify the position of simplified planning zones. He will recall that on Second Reading I was concerned about the way in which the Bill was originally drafted in that it seemed to me to leave a giant hole into which planning development without adequate controls could be placed. While the amendments inserted by the Government and the other place go some way towards allaying fears, I am not completely satisfied that they go all that far. However, I thank the Government and the Opposition for agreeing to the changes that have been made.

In Lords amendment No. 62, new section 24AA(1)*(b)* refers to

"consent, agreement or approval of the local planning authority".

Far from the clarification to which my hon. Friend referred, those words cause considerable unrest in Dorset and in my constituency and others like it. Notwithstanding the Bill, as amended, there seems to be some uncertainty about precisely what the Government are trying to do. There are to be simplified planning zones, but there now seems to be a clear conflict between this part of the Bill and current planning circulars which continue to push development where it is not needed — into the prosperous areas of the country — thus depriving rundown areas of the development and investment funds that they so desperately need.

All hon. Members are anxious that there should be more development in the inner cities, and we hope that the simplified planning zones will help to bring that about. However, I do not believe that they will have more than a slightly cosmetic impact on the problem unless and until the Government change their attitudes to planning. The current circulars are pushing development into areas where it is not needed — into prosperous areas — and simultaneously they are forcing environmentally unwanted housing and shopping developments into those prosperous areas where there is neither the need for the investment nor the desire for the development.

The Bill, as amended, should help to reduce the north-south disparity, but the planning laws and circulars as they now stand do not achieve that objective. Many of my constituents are perfectly willing to accept a slower rise in living standards if the environment in which they live can be protected.

In the last few days a controversial and, to me, welcome speech was made by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales about housing and planning policies. Lord Northfield — a Labour peer, notwithstanding the fact that he is chairman of a company called Consortium Developments — has been extremely rude about the Prince of Wales' speech. He said that His Royal Highness had been

"hijacked by the Loony Green Brigade."

If membership of the "Loony Green Brigade" is open to anyone who values the retention of the green fields of England above the profits of members of the House Builders Federation, I should not only be willing to apply for membership of the brigade but I might even be willing to allow my name to go forward to serve as an officer in the brigade.

There is that discrepancy between the current circulars and the object of this part of the Bill. The Government are being urged by not only Government opponents but by Government supporters seriously to look at the circulars that are being sent to local authorities so that the words of amendment No. 62—

"requiring the consent, agreement or approval of the local planning authority"—

can mean something in practice. At the moment they are virtually meaningless in my constituency. If the local planning authority should decide that it does not wish developments to take place because they are unpopular and not needed, there have been far too many occasions in the last few years when the Department of the Environment has overturned its planning refusals.

I look forward to the Minister's success in clarifying the amendments. I hope that he will be bold and brave and that in due course he will take the next step and clarify the circulars so that planning law moves in the same direction as the Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister go a little further to allay the fears expressed in another place where the Opposition pushed an amendment on this matter to a Division?

Great anxiety was expressed by their Lordships and on behalf of the Council for the Protection of Rural England about issues that were raised in Committee in this House concerning the control of development in a simplified planning zone scheme which is begun, in effect, in name only. Examples were given of developers coming on site in a simplified planning zone, which will not have as many planning restraints as other areas, digging a trench, counting that as the beginning of a development and being able to benefit from the less restrictive planning regime, even though it will have ended before the development is completed.

Amendment No. 63 says:

"The provisions of section 44(2) to (6) of this Act . . . apply to planning permission under a simplified planning zone scheme".

Those provisions provide for the termination of planning permission if the completion of development is unreasonably delayed, but I hope that the Minister will go further and say that he and his colleagues will not condone any abuse of the advantages of simplified planning zones and that there will be monitoring to ensure that there is no abuse.

Developers in simplified planning zones must develop as the Act intends and not abuse their advantages and gain from increased land values. Throughout the south-east there has been a massive escalation in land values and we must provide all possible protection against abuse. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that his Department will not condone abuse but will help local authorities to prevent any abuse.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Like other hon. Members, I regard simplified planning zones as an exciting concept, though it is appropriate for some urban areas and

[Mr. Nicholas Baker]

not for others, most of which are set out as exceptions in new section 24C. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), I do not believe that the exceptions go far enough, because agricultural land that is not in a green belt or conservation area would not be excepted, as I should wish.

The amendments are important in planning terms. Amendment No. 62, dealing with conditions and limitations on planning permission, amendment No. 65, which excludes some land from simplified planning zones, and several others are an important step in distinguishing between one part of our environmental heritage and the rest of it. They say that we must have extremely fine equipment to distinguish between the developments that will be allowed in our inner cities and in other areas. That is an important principle which will have to be applied much more widely.

As the Minister knows, there is great worry about overdevelopment in the south of England and some anxiety that the restriction on simplified planning zones is insufficient. My hon. Friend confirmed last week that the Government are not trying to drive forward overdevelopment in the south. I judge the amendments by the extent to which they reflect the guidelines set out by my hon. Friend in his speech last week, and I ask him whether the rules for planning that we have will cater for simplified planning zones and bring them satisfactorily within the rules.

The circular, "Land For Housing", which my hon. Friend the Minister will know well, does not mention SPZs, and one would not expect it to do so, but it makes some distinctions between different types of land. I refer to the circular because it is the main instrument which officials in county councils use as their guidelines for the type of development that they will seek and that they expect the Government will allow. The circular is being used, and I and my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch and many others divine it to be the root cause of the overdevelopment that we are experiencing. I believe that the circular is out of date and that it will have to be amended to cater for SPZs.

9.15 pm

Secondly, the circular will have to do more to comply with the spirit of the amendments, which I am delighted to see before the House. We must have planning rules which distinguish much more finely in the future than in the past between different types of land—urban land and rural land—and can be applied firmly to back up the distinctions. Those rules must ensure that we do not suffer from the overdevelopment that is now going on in the south of England. In common with others, I look forward to what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say in reply.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): I do not wish to detain the House unduly, because in a real sense, as my hon. Friend the Minister was kind enough to acknowledge, I was the instigator of the amendments before us when the Bill was being considered in Committee. I understand fully the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker). My reasoning is that the Government's intention is to try to circumvent to an intelligent and practical degree the necessary long-windedness of planning applications to encourage development, especially in some derelict urban areas. I do not think it is the intention to use the device of simplified planning zones to encourage development in the green field sites, which my hon. Friends have explained so eloquently is a cause of their concern.

If we had tried to define an urban area in Committee, we would have found it difficult to differentiate between that and what could be conceived as a rural area. There are certainly some rural derelict areas where the SPZ concept might be as favourably imposed as in urban areas. Therefore, I have to return to what I believe to be a possible loophole in the provision that we are considering, which I warmly welcome and recommend. Under the 1968 legislation a time limit was imposed on any planning permissions granted by local planning authorities under the town and country planning legislation.

The purpose of the SPZ concept, however, was to circumvent planning requirements in certain areas for a specified period. It was possible that a potential developer might come along with no intention of developing, but seeing an opportunity to obtain planning permission in a different way and so not be held to a time limit in which to execute the permission. As I understood the Bill as it was conceived, it provided that there was no time limit once planning permission was deemed to have been granted under the SPZ concept, and I moved amendments in Committee which were favourably received by my hon. Friend the Minister. In that context, I believe that the Minister and the Government have things exactly right.

Amendment No. 63 meets the wishes, or allays the anxieties, that I have expressed. I can only say to my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch and for Dorset, North that I do not believe that their suspicions or worries will be in any way realised when the Bill becomes an Act.

Mr. Adley: We all listen with great respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), because there can be few hon. Members who know more about these matters than he. However, I would like to give him one illustration of the reasons for concern. Clause 24C *(d)* refers to

"land identified in the development plan for the district as part of the green belt"

There are always arguments between developers and local authorities about what is or is not green belt and whether or not a local authority, having identified an area as green belt before it has been enshrined in statute, is entitled to say that that is green belt as identified in this particular subsection.

I make that point, because my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) and I are concerned about this matter. We are worried that in future local authorities might get ideas above their station—if I may put it that way—about an area that they want to see developed around some of the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Adley: I would like my hon. Friend to comment on that last point.

Mr. Chapman: I do not know the geography or environment of my hon. Friend's constituency in the way that I can claim to know my own. There are different interpretations of green belt. I would say that there is no

such thing as established green belt around my hon. Friend's constituency. It is not established green belt as laid down by statute in the same way as the metropolitan green belt is laid down in statute.

The Bill, if enacted,—and I hope that it will be—will in no way prejudice my hon. Friend from making representations to the Minister, or, through his local planning authority, to bring to this House what he believes to be the dispute about the way that the Act is working. I say that with sincerity and a certain amount of logic. In matters relating to town and country planning the House cannot dot every "i" and cross every "t". It is a matter of the way in which planning law is interpreted, not least by local planning authorities. If my hon. Friend felt that this whole issue was being abused by the Government, or by a future Government, he would be in the vanguard and would have a great deal of sympathy and support from hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I apologise for intervening at such length. I had intended that my remarks should be much shorter. As Back Benchers, we tend to complain when we think that the Government are getting it wrong. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for taking heed of what was said in Committee. As far as I can judge the issue—and I cannot state that I am right—he has got it just right and that should allay the fears that hon. Members on both sides expressed in Committee.

Mr. Tracey: I thought once or twice this evening that we were having a general planning and housing debate. There is nothing wrong with that in other circumstances. Indeed, my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) and I had a similar debate about 10 days ago; it was a fine debate. However, we are discussing simplified planning zones and the Lords amendment to the Bill.

Before I deal with what has been said by my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch and for Dorset, North, I want to deal with the points raised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who was concerned about the monitoring of the way in which the scheme was working out. In the first place, it will be for the local planning authority to monitor any of the abuses to which he rightly drew our attention by way of example. It will then be for the local planning authority to make any completion notice which it thinks fit and to submit it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Every care will be taken when considering such a completion notice. My right hon. Friend will confirm such a notice when he believes that it is right and proper to do so to prevent the kind of abuse that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey mentioned.

The remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) in Standing Committee were useful and informative. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I are grateful to him for paying us compliments. He said that we have moved in the right direction and have got it right. It is always nice for Ministers to be told that they have got something right.

My hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch and for Dorset, North pointed to the best possible use of simplified planning zones in the more industrial areas rather than green fields. I accept what they said. Indeed, similar proposals were put to us several times during the passage of the Bill, both in this House and in another place. I understand their deeply held concern that simplified planning zones should not be set up in areas where no development stimulus is needed or wanted. The Government recognised that concern by accepting an amendment proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet to prevent simplified planning zones from being set up in truly defined sensitive areas such as national parks, green belts, conservation areas, sites of special scientific interest and areas of outstanding natural beauty. The Minister of State and I were happy to agree with the amendment.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have power to make an order preventing simplified planning zones from being set up where they are obviously not suitable. He will be prepared to use that power where necessary. I make that clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North.

It would be too restrictive for the Bill to provide that SPZs may never be set up outside a closely defined industrial area. There may be occasions on which an SPZ scheme providing, perhaps, for mixed development would be appropriate. I hope that my hon. Friends will accept that the procedures for adopting SPZs are thorough and will ensure that attention is drawn to any unsuitable proposals which can be modified or, if necessary, stopped. That is certainly the intention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Adley: I am grateful for the remarks of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. It is important that the Secretary of State should have these powers and be prepared to use them. There is a town not a thousand miles from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North where there seems to be an inordinate number of developers, estate agents and similar people on the local authority. We are concerned about such areas.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 61 to 77 agreed to.

Clause 18

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES AUTHORITIES

Lords amendment. No. 78, in page 34, line 36, at end insert—

"(3) For the purposes of this section any land to which this subsection applies but which is not operational land of statutory undertakers authorised to carry on a harbour undertaking shall be treated as if it were such operational land.

(4) Subsection (3) above applies—

(a) to a wharf; and

(b) to harbour land,

as defined in the Harbours Act 1964.

(5) Any question whether subsection (3) above applies to land shall be determined by the Secretary of State and the Minister who is the appropriate Minister in relation to operational land of statutory undertakers who are authorised to carry on harbour undertakings."

Mr. Tracey: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 79 to 133 and 215 to 220.

9.30 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): Members of the Committee will recall that I moved some amendments in Committee to which the Minister gave a favourable

[Mr. John Powley]

response. On Report, he gave an undertaking that amendments reflecting the comments that had been made in Committee would be moved in the other place.

I commend and thank my hon. Friend the Minister for the diligent way in which he dealt with the concerns expressed in Committee on behalf of people who would have been involved in the hazardous substances arrangements. The amendments that have been moved and that I hope will be accepted satisfy the anxieties that were expressed. They will enable the companies involved to proceed much more satisfactorily, and I believe that the Bill will be greatly improved as a result of the amendments.

Mr. Tracey: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) for the way in which he pursued the matter in Committee. Since then we have discussed it in detail with the Confederation of British Industry, the local authority associations, the Royal Town Planning Institute, and the British Ports Association. We arrived at what I believe is an acceptable solution.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 79 to 134 agreed to.

Clause 28

LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

Lords amendment: No. 135, in page 74, line 16, at end insert—

"*(aa)* the scope of the exception for urgent works to a listed building;"

Mr. Tracey: I beg to move, that this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 137, 145, 147 to 149, 232, 234 to 240, 243 and 244.

Mr. Tracey: This group of amendments does not need much explanation. Amendments Nos. 135, 137, 145 and 147 to 149 are simply additions or drafting amendments to the list of items in clauses 28 and 36, which are the subject of amendments to schedule 7, parts I and II.

Amendment No. 232 replaces the amendment tabled in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) with a revised version that keeps the good points of my hon. Friend's amendment but removes the parts that were unacceptable to us snd strengthens the subjection generally. There are some occasions when demolition is the only way of making a building safe quickly, and we considered that it was wrong to remove the defence given by section 55(6) entirely if demolition has taken place. We trust that the new wording will reduce the opportunities for abuse of the defence. Amendment No. 240 is a similar amendment to the Scottish provisions.

In addition, in England and Wales, through amendment No. 234, we have taken a power to require authorities to consider using their repairs powers before seeking a dangerous structures notice or order and we made it clear that such orders or notices do not override listed building control.

Amendment No. 238 and the consequential amendment No. 239 fulfil a promise given to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England that there would be a statutory requirement to consult it before a direction is made leaving decisions on listed building consent cases to authorities to decide. Amendments 235, 236, 237 243, and 244 are technical amendments adding section numbers of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 to the lists of sections which may be applied to unlisted buildings in conservation areas.

Mr. Chapman: It would be ungenerous of me if I did not thank my hon. Friend the Minister once again for being sympathetic and for considering the criticisms I made of the Bill in Committee. He has examined those parts of what I said that he felt he could accept and those which, on balance, he felt he could not accept. It would be extremely pettifogging and carping of me to insist that my original amendments should be carried. My hon. Friend has got it right and it is purely a matter of detail if we disagree on the exact interpretation of some of the details.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 136 to 142 agreed to.

New Clause

AREAS WHICH MAY BE DESIGNATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Lords amendment: No. 143, after clause 33 insert the following new clause—

" . In section 134 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 (power to designate urban development areas), omit subsection (2) (which restricts the power to land in metropolitan districts and certain land in or adjacent to inner London)."

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I apologise for my debut being at the eleventh hour. However, as the House will know, last month I proposed a major new initiative to bring prosperity back to some of our northern cities by setting up four new urban development corporations. I do not want to debate that at length now because the House will be able to debate each proposal on the relevant order as it comes forward. I am sure that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), whom I congratulate on his re-election to the shadow Cabinet and retention of his portfolio, will welcome this initiative, especially after what he said two weeks' ago at the conference of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. He said:

"Blighted and derelict land has disfigured many urban centres for decades, prevented from development by cumbersome and often secretive planning and decision-making mechanisms."

I entirely agree.

The amendment was moved in another place as soon as the Government had decided to seek to set up four further urban development corporations. One of these is proposed for Teesside. Under the legislation as it now stands, an urban development corporation in England may be set up only in a metropolitan county or in inner London. An urban development corporation may be set up anywhere in Scotland or Wales.

Teesside is within the non-metropolitan county of Cleveland. The amendment removes the English restrictions so that an urban development corporation can be set up anywhere in the kingdom where it is justified. This would give England equality of treatment with Scotland

and Wales. That was the Government's intention in the 1980 Act. The restriction for England was inserted when the legislation went through the House.

Although the scope of the amendment is narrow—whether I should be empowered to lay an order proposing the setting-up of an urban development corporation in a non-metropolitan area—whether there should be such a corporation will of course be for Parliament to decide. This is not the time or place to prejudge that question for any particular area. But I would not expect anyone to argue that the problems of Teesside are in any way less significant than those in metropolitan areas. It is clearly nonsense that this important means of tackling areas of major urban dereliction should not be available in Teesside. In due course I shall propose a Teesside UDC to the House, and the House will then have the opportunity to debate the principle.

Mr. Rooker: As the Secretary of State said, this is not an appropriate time or place for a debate on urban development corporations. They can be useful instruments, but they are not useful if their prime purpose is deliberately to bypass or ignore local authorities and the needs and wishes of the people. Our sincere wish and hope is that that will not happen. So far, there is no indication that it will, but we could not support the proposal if it did.

In certain areas, regeneration will not take place without a comprehensive strategy and a concentration of resources. It is ludicrous that, if an area falls outside a metropolitan area, based upon a map drawn years ago, it cannot benefit from a concentration of resources.

We are not interested in any diminution of democratic authority or control. In due course all the powers granted to UDCs will return to local authorities. We do not put a time limit or make a claim about that, but it will happen. It would be ludicrous to oppose the extension of this legislation, because of the identification of the tragic dereliction on Teesside. We shall have a wider debate on the issue at a more appropriate time. I do not enter a caveat on the proposal, nor do I welcome it. I just wanted to make a brief statement explaining that we understand the need to concentrate resources and to work out a comprehensive strategy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I appreciate that the Government now recognise that the need for urban renewal and regeneration goes beyond the traditional confines of the inner cities. One of the most important statements by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his recent report was that the outer urban areas often experience greater deprivation than the inner urban areas. There are many such areas in this part of the country and elsewhere. Strategies for urban renewal and regeneration should apply anywhere.

I am the only hon. Member in the House at present who represents a constituency within one of the two existing urban development corporation areas. The history of the last five years shows that the UDCs bring both advantages and disadvantages. There is inadequate co-ordination in south London, and Southwark in particular. I hope that the experience of those five years will be learnt as the Secretary of State formulates his plans for the four new UDC areas. We shall have an opportunity to debate the urban development corporations. We look forward to that opportunity and welcome it.

Two principles are more strongly argued and upheld in the proposals than before. First, the new urban development corporations are to act in partnership with the local authorities as well as with the private sector to bring in additional money. So far the urban development corporations have often seemed to act over the head of, and not in partnership with, local authorities. Secondly, consultation with the people who live there should be started from the beginning. One problem with the London Docklands Development Corporation was that at the beginning there was an inadequate framework of consultation with local people to enable the existing communities to be reinforced, upheld, strengthened and supported. I hope that the proposals will change that, and that the Secretary of State will respond to the anxieties that have been born out of the experience of our two development corporations. A strategy is now needed to do much more for urban regeneration and renewal of our devastated economy.

9.45 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I rise briefly to support the Government in this move. It has long been an anomaly that all areas needing urban regeneration were thought to be in the metropolitan counties or in London. Cleveland is certainly ripe for this initiative. I was once a parliamentary candidate in Cleveland and I have retained my affection and links with the area. I wish to place on record my tribute to the leader of the Conservatives on Stockton council, Councillor Laurie Wild, who has done much to campaign for this measure. I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State places the appropriate order before the House, new prosperity will come to that area.

Mr. Ridley: I wish to respond briefly to the points which have been made. I thank the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) for welcoming the proposal. It is a major proposal. It involves considerable expense, and so its importance must not be underestimated.

I wish to reply to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Southwark and Bermondsey who made almost the same points about the proposal. My reply is that there are representatives of local authorities on the London Docklands Development Corporation and on the Merseyside Development Corporation. That could be taken as a precedent, but local authority members should not dominate the board of any new urban development corporation. Every encouragement will be given to local authorities that wish to co-operate with a UDC. But, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, some local authorities have appeared to try to frustrate this sort of development and in that case we shall push on. We are determined that nothing shall the stop the redevelopment of these areas. If a local authority wants to help, it will be very welcome, but if it does not the work must still be done.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey talks about the people. This amendment is about Teesside, and the area we have in mind does not have one inhabitant. It is completely derelict on both sides of the river. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West will know it well. If anybody argued that anyone should be stopped from developing that area, he would be off his head.

We really do mean business in establishing the development corporations and in putting money into

[Mr. Ridley]

them. We shall make a determined effort to bring back the sort of conditions under which people want to build houses, factories, shops, leisure centres—every sort of development—and to give every chance for economic recovery in those areas.

I confess to a slight prejudice in this matter, coming myself from the north-east. This is the only way, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey acknowledges, to concentrate and co-ordinate the efforts of all Government and local government departments, with the necessary resources to achieve the rejuvenation that the House wants to see.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 144 to 244 agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Schedule 8

LOCAL PLANS AND UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Lords amendment: No. 245, in page 146, leave out lines 23 to 29 and insert—

"(5) A local planning authority may prepare a local plan for a part of their area (an "action area") which they have selected for the commencement during a prescribed period of comprehensive treatment, by development, redevelopment or improvement of the whole or part of the area selected, or partly by one method and partly by another; and a local plan prepared for such an action area shall indicate the nature of the treatment selected for the area."

Mr. Tracey: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 246, 261 to 263 and 265.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the effect of amendment No. 245 be to allow local authorities, not merely to produce plans for the whole of that authority—this was altered in recent legislation—but to allow them to proceed with parts of their authority in turn, if they are not ready or do not wish to provide plans for the whole area? There used to be area or district statutory plans. That was changed and the change affected London boroughs which had to make only a borough-wide local plan. Will they be able to return to having plans covering areas smaller than the whole borough or district as a result of the proposal? What effect will the amendment have on borough or district councils?

Mr. Tracey: This is a drafting amendment and proposes the substitution in new section 11(5) of the 1971 legislation of a revised text, dealing with local plans for action areas. That is more faithful to the present provisions of the 1971 legislation. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I hope that at some stage the Minister will elaborate on how the matter relates to other statutory planning functions of local authorities.

Mr. Tracey: I shall be happy to write to the hon. Gentleman to clarify any of those points.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 246 to 321 agreed to.

Domestic Violence

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

9.58 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): In January 1986 the working party established by the Metropolitan police into domestic violence against women in their own homes reported to Scotland Yard. That working party, which had seven serving police officers headed by a chief inspector and three outside members, produced an illuminating, interesting and positive report. The report has not yet been published or implemented. I have received a copy of it, and with that in mind I have requested this debate. It reveals the staggering scale of the problem.

The report says that the statistics about the number of incidents of violence against women by their husbands or partners in their own homes in the metropolis are inadequate and inaccurate. It estimates that something like 28,000 calls a year about incidents of domestic violence are made to police stations in London. It records that those calls probably represent only a quarter to a third of the overall number of incidents that occur. That is because many women are understandably reluctant to call outside help, let alone police help, in such difficult and dangerous circumstances.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Smith: Looking at the statistics in the report, we can only conclude that there must be something like 100,000 incidents of domestic violence in London each year. That is a staggering problem and the House and the Metropolitan police should be worried about it. A working party was established, it took a great deal of evidence from outside organisations, and it produced a remarkable report. I commend the Metropolitan police for having established that working party. I also commend the working party for producing a report couched in remarkably progressive language. It puts forward a series of sensible and important recommendations. However, that report has remained on desks in Scotland Yard and presumably in the Home Office—because, of course, the Home Secretary is the police authority for the metropolis—for the past 10 months. Why is it that with a problem of such importance and when so many women throughout London are at risk no action has been taken since January?

The report contains some urgent recommendations, many of which could have been implemented immediately. One must ask why the delay has occurred. Has the delay been at Scotland Yard or at the Home Office? Is Scotland Yard, as it has been quoted in some newspapers in the last few days as saying, waiting for some national policy directive from the Home Office? Has the delay occurred because no one has understood and appreciated the importance of the issue that is under discussion?

Can the Minister tell us exactly how the delay has occurred and whether it will be possible for the recommendations in the report to be implemented as rapidly as the Home Office and Scotland Yard between them can manage?

What needs to be done? First, attitudes need to change. The report is a damning indictment of the attitude of many

police officers in the metropolis towards domestic violence. It is quite clear from passages in the report that many serving police officers see violence against a woman in her own home as less worthy of their attention and less important than, for example, violence on the street. That cannot be the case. Violence is violence whether it happens within the confines of one's own home or on the streets of London. The police response in each case must be one of concern for the victim and a desire to prevent any further occurrence of such violence.

The report contains some staggering comments and I shall read one or two of them because they are illuminating. The report says:

"What is of importance is the persistent trend to under-report to police coupled with the fact that many of those who had reported to police find them unhelpful."

It quotes an article which says:

"The Police emerged as the least helpful of all the main agencies to which women turned for help before going to the refuge . . . Except in cases of very severe injury, the helpfulness of the police reflected neither the severity of the injuries, nor the frequency with which the woman had been assaulted in the past."

Under the training section, the report says:

"Knowledge of the law and police procedure is somewhat vague as far as many District officers are concerned, to say nothing of the lack of empathy expressed towards victims of domestic violence during their encounters with the police."

Further on, the report says:

"There seems to be generally a sense of frustration when the Police are called to incidents of domestic violence, particularly if there has to be more than one call to the same home. There appears to be little understanding of the predicament of the woman living in violent or potentially violent situations."

There are many other examples of such criticism, but just one more, which is perhaps the most revealing paragraph in the report, will suffice. It says:

"On being questioned, many Police Officers felt that Domestic Violence should not be part of their work at all. Any situation of that kind was seen as being (generally) just a waste of time. (Another view of this kind of work was that it was no help whatsoever when applying for other posts or promotion)."

It is quite clear from the report, which, it should be remembered, has been prepared by the police, that police attitudes to domestic violence fall far short of the seriousness with which the problem ought to be addressed.

The first and major question that we have to ask the Home Office and Scotland Yard is, "Will you please ensure by all means possible that serving police officers throughout the force treat violence against women in their own home with the seriousness that it deserves?" Changing the attitudes that are revealed by the report is crucial. It is a task of the utmost priority for the Home Office.

Secondly, and allied to changing attitudes, there is the need to change the training programme and the procedures for new recruits and existing officers in the Metropolitan police. It is by training that the police can become able to deal sensitively and appropriately with such difficult and often delicate situations as arise when there is domestic violence.

The third aim should be to change the keeping of records. Throughout the report, there is criticism of how current record keeping practices are ignored and inadequate. There must be proper record keeping so that we can all know exactly the extent of the problem and the success or failure of the police in assisting the victims of domestic violence.

Fourthly, a simple proposal in the report reveals that, at the moment, police mileage allowance regulations forbid a police vehicle being used to transport a woman who has just been the victim of an assault in her home to a safe refuge. A police car in London cannot be used to take her to safety. Surely that is nonsense. The police could improve matters overnight by changing the regulations so that cars can be used for that purpose. The report says that that has already been done in Cleveland. That bit of good practice should be used here as of tomorrow. I hope that the Minister will be able to give a commitment to that effect.

Fifthly, we must ensure that police officers know about all the other referral agencies that are available to help victims of domestic violence. It is surely right and proper that the widest possible range of advice and counselling should be available in such difficult circumstances, and the police — because they are often the first agency to be called to the scene — must be able to refer to other suitable, proper and good agencies.

The final recommendation that I draw to the Home Secretary's attention is the recommendation that as third parties to a dispute the police should be more prepared to prosecute the violent man. The report quotes extensively from Canadian experience in Ontario where this has been attempted and been found to be very successful indeed. Frequently it is difficult for a woman in such circumstances to bring her own prosecution. Often there is a need to try to heal the relationship as well as to attempt to prevent any recurrence of the violence. In those circumstances it is surely helpful that any prosecution aimed at preventing a further occurrence should come not from the woman herself but from the police.

That is now possible under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. The police have the power to bring that sort of prosecution. Evidence from Canada suggests that it could be very successful in reducing the level of violence and in helping to resolve the problem when it occurs.

Mr. John Whitfield (Dewsbury): Except in the most extreme case, are not the matters to which the hon. Gentleman has referred in his excellent speech matters for the social services rather than the concern of our hard-pressed police forces?

Mr. Smith: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman fails to recognise the severity of the problem in many cases. He also fails to understand that in many of these instances the police are the first line of call because they are a 24-hour service, and very few other agencies are. Therefore, it is surely important for the police to have the knowledge of how to deal with these instances and occurrences.

What is more, I am sure the hon Gentleman would agree that when violence is occasioned, it is a crime. The police are supposed to fight crime as well as to deter it. Where violence occurs against a women in her home, it is still violence, just as it is if it occurs outside the home.

Of course, other agencies must be involved, and ultimately we are talking not just about police involvement, but about social services involvement, voluntary agency involvement and probably probation involvement. However, the police are part and parcel of that multi-agency approach which will be needed. Where violence is occasioned to a person, the police can and must be involved. Sadly, the hon. Gentleman failed to acknowledge that extremely important point.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Surely it is worth noting that especially in the last two or thee years the police have become involved in areas where hitherto they have not been involved — for example, on the rugby field. There was also a recent incident on the football field. Previously such violence went unnoticed, or at least it was not tackled by the police, yet increasingly they are now moving into such areas. If they can do that, surely they should move into the area that my hon. Friend is describing so well.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We cannot have one standard of law, justice and violence prevention for inside the home or on the football field and another for outside. This is something about which many women have been concerned for a long time. The traditional male attitude is that there is a privacy to the home and there are rights connected with marriage that somehow protect the man when being violent towards his wife or partner. That attitude must be changed. Violence towards one's partner is just as bad and reprehensible as violence to a stranger in the street.

The Ontario experience shows that when the police decide to prosecute it assists in reducing violence and preventing further cases of assault. The report recommends that a pilot project should be established in one London district. I hope that the Home Office and Scotland Yard will carefully consider the implementation of that recommendation as soon as possible.

I have drawn those six basic recommendations from the Metropolitan police's report. I cannot stress too stongly that this is the Metropolitan police's own report which was published in January 1986. I shall add three other recommendations to those of the Metropolitan police. First, there ought to be — certainly for London — a 24-hour telephone line made available for women. They should be able to phone in with any account of violence, rape or difficulty that they have experienced. That line should be specifically for women, and it should be handled by women at the other end of the line. That would increase dramatically women's confidence in reporting incidents of this kind to the police. That must be for the better.

Secondly, I hope that the Home Office will commit itself to increasing the proportion of women officers within the Metropolitan police force. At the moment, 10 per cent. of the Metropolitan police are women. Of 26 commanders, only two are women. The standing, culture and nature of the Metropolitan police would be greatly improved if there were more women officers. I hope that the Home Office has it in mind to increase the proportion of women who form part of the Metropolitan police.

Thirdly, a greater number of safe refuges is also needed for women who are subjected to violence. That involves money and resources. It means setting up refuges and ensuring that they are properly run and staffed and that space is made available in them for women who have been subjected to violence. I hope that the Government are committed to assisting that process.

This report has lain on the table for far too long. The problem is massive and urgent. Many women fear the threat of violence and they risk violence and assault within their homes. All of us ought to be concerned about preventing and deterring violence and we ought to try to assist in preventing it. The report offers a way of doing so. I hope that the Home Office and Scotland Yard will tonight commit themselves to taking immediate steps to provide help in a much more rapid and sensitive way than I fear has happened since this report was published.

10.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) for having adopted this subject for the Adjournment debate. He has argued his points in a remarkably cogent, lucid and persuasive manner. If some of his hon. Friends did likewise, they would carry more weight in this place.

The hon. Gentleman is right to focus on violence to women. For a whole variety of reasons, this country is more conscious than it has been in the past that this is a major problem and that not all of us have responded in entirely the way that one would have wished. However, I am afraid that I shall have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman to some extent. I shall not give the authoritative commitment that he has invited me to give.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the report prepared by the Metropolitan police. I shall start by making a number of preliminary remarks about that report. First, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the report was made by the Metropolitan police; it is not a Home Office document. I do not accept that there has been any delay by the Home Office in any regard.

Secondly, I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the fact that the Metropolitan police commissioned the report and invited outsiders to serve on the working group demonstrates the force's willingness to look at its practices and procedures with a critical eye. The Metropolitan police are willing to introduce changes when they are necessary.

Thirdly, the implementation of the report is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, who will, doubtless, wish to consider the report in the context of the Home Office circular that was issued last month. Because this is a matter for the commissioner, it would be wrong for me to seek, at least at this stage, to express a positive view on any recommendation. However, I was pleased to hear the positive declaration of intent made today by Detective Superintendent Street on "The World at One" programme on which the hon. Gentleman also appeared. I welcome the positive statement by the superintendent that he regards the recommendations as "relevant and necessary" and that the Metropolitan police intend to put them into practice. That seemed to me to be a positive way forward and I support it.

After those preliminary remarks, I wish to consider what the police are doing about domestic violence and what more they should be doing. All of us who have practised law, as I think the hon. Gentleman has——

Mr. Chris Smith *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman has not done so. I thought that he had. I am sure that he agrees that domestic violence is one of the most difficult problems that the police have to deal with.

It is right and necessary that hon. Members and Ministers should assert the basic proposition that an act of violence committed by one spouse against another is as much an offence as is an act of violence committed against

a stranger. I do not wish any hon. Member to try to argue that violence against a spouse should be regarded as less serious than violence against a stranger.

Indeed, in many cases, especially those involving families with children or when there are continuing offences, the violence shown by one spouse to another is more serious than violence shown to a stranger. There are special reasons why that is so. In many cases, a wife depends on her husband for her home and income and for the home and income of her children. She has no escape. Frequently, when a spouse summons the police it is a cry for help at the end of a long period of provocation.

The Government recognised those facts and have introduced two substantive changes in the law this year to improve the position. The hon. Gentleman will know well that on 1 January the Police and Criminal Evidence Act came into force. In this context there are two provisions in the Act that are of special importance. First, we have enhanced the powers of arrest so that the police can arrest to prevent future and prospective violence. This is a great improvement on what was previously the position. Secondly, and perhaps equally as important, the Act provides that a spouse is not merely a competent witness but a compellable witness in a trial. The Government have, by their legislative programme, accepted many of the points that the hon. Gentleman has made and have changed the law so as to accommodate them.

The law itself cannot provide a complete answer to the problem and it is necessary for us all to face and recognise the difficulties that confront police officers. It often happens that police are called to homes by worried neighbours or distraught wives, and when they arrive at the scene the friction dies down and the police are perceived as being outsiders, to be treated with a degree of suspicion, if not hostility. There are a variety of reasons for this. Sometimes the victim may call the police as a sort of warning to her spouse. The noisy dispute which alerts neighbours may in reality be no more than that, a noisy dispute. Even when a spouse has been the subject of assault, quite frequently the desire for reconciliation is much stronger than the desire to have the man prosecuted. Therefore, we must recognise and accept the special problems that confront police officers in these circumstances.

When a police officer attends a scene it is often not clear to him whether an act of violence has occurred or whether one is likely to occur. A wife in tears and a broken chair may suggest violence, but it may suggest also a row in which the man broke his own property. I make the point to try to stress the evidential difficulties which face these officers and not to undermine the hon. Gentleman's arguments or those which I have advanced already.

Nor is it helpful to speak in terms of cases that the police might bring. Throughout the criminal law there is a range of cases that the police might bring, but for reasons of good public policy it is often desirable to proceed with no more than a caution. Frequently a caution is a sufficient response. We must be clear, however, that the safety of the spouse and that of her children must be the paramount consideration. At all times, and whenever the police attend the scene of an incident of this sort, they must be alert to the possibility of prospective violence.

It was on that basis that we responded to the recommendations of the Women's National Commission, which, as the hon. Gentleman will know, was chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame Peggy Fenner) and produced a most distinguished report. In response to the recommendations, the Government issued a circular on 15 October, a copy of which is now to be found in the Library. There are a number of matters I wish to mention because they go a long way to meet the hon. Gentleman's concern. First, we have asked the police to give priority in cases of domestic violence to the overriding need to ensure the safety of victims and to reduce the risk of further violence. This can be done by arresting the offender if necessary or desirable under the enhanced powers of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. We have asked chief police officers to consider providing practical help to victims by putting them in touch with local authority support agencies. We have recommended that substantial changes should be made in the practice of recording no crime. Incidents should be recorded as no crime only if there is positive evidence of fabrication or withdrawal. Insufficient evidence itself is not a reason for showing no crime.

In summary, the hon. Gentleman has raised an important matter. We recognise that it is important and I hope and believe that what we have done is part of a process whereby this problem and area of difficulty will be tackled and accordingly the life of victims will be a great deal better.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 4 November 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PRIVATE BILLS */Lords/* (SUSPENSION)

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Messages [27th October and 3rd November] as relates to the Brighton Marine Palace and Pier Bill */Lords/*, the County of Cleveland Bill */Lords/*, the London Underground (Goodge Street) Bill */Lords/*, the Dyfed Bill */Lords/* be now considered.

Resolved,

That this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution. — */The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means/*.

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

ABERYSTWYTH HARBOUR BILL, BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL, LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (CITY EXTENSION) BILL AND PONTYPRIDD MARKETS FAIRS AND TOWN HALL BILL

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Messages [29th October and 3rd November] as relates to the Aberystwyth Harbour Bill, the British Railways (No. 2) Bill the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Bill and the Pontypridd Markets Fairs and Town Hall Bill be now considered.

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Aberystwyth Harbour Bill, the British Railways (No. 2) Bill, the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Bill and the Pontypridd Markets Fairs and Town Hall Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bills in the next Session of Parliament, provided that in the case of each Bill the agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bills shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with each Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That each Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first, second and third time and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House. — */The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means/*.

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Strategic Defence Initiative

1. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of Defence what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of the United States concerning the strategic defence initiative; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): I have had a number of discussions on SDI with representatives of the United States Government in recent weeks, including at the NATO nuclear planning group meeting at Gleneagles. The detail of those discussions is confidential, but I refer the hon. Gentleman to the NPG communiqué, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Clay: Is it not the case that the Reykjavik summit demonstrated that the illusion of SDI, far from enhancing the possibility of nuclear disarmament, is the main stumbling block? In the light of that, should not the Secretary of State have a word with the Prime Minister and ask her to tell President Reagan that we believe that the only reason why America wants British involvement is to rip off commercial research and development by British firms? Will the Secretary of State come clean about the anti-tactical ballistic missile initiative and make an honest statement? Finally, will he tell President Reagan to withdraw this proposal and grasp the offer made by Mikhail Gorbachev at Reykjavik?

Mr. Younger: Nothing that happened at Reykjavik alters the fact that the Soviet Union has been engaged in research into strategic defence matters for a long time, and that its efforts at Reykjavik were aimed at trying to prevent the United States from doing the same while carrying on doing it itself, which seems wholly unreasonable.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we can get away from the doctrine of MAD — mutually assured destruction — that would be of great advantage to the world, not just the East, but the West as well? Do we not want to get away from that and substitute something effective, which will work to ensure peace for the future?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend, and that is why the Government put such a high priority on encouraging our allies in the United States to negotiate as strongly as they can for reductions, in arms provided that they are balanced reductions, including all types of armaments, so that security in the West can be maintained.

Mr. Beith: Do the Government believe that SDI can create an impenetrable nuclear shield which will make nuclear weapons unnecessary? How will that help Europe?

Mr. Younger: The purpose of the SDI programme is to establish whether such techniques can produce such an effect and, if so, whether they can be deployed to be an extra protection for the West. British participation is based on the fact that it is research into that possibility and no further.

Mr. Wilkinson: Was not the President of the United States in a sense set up by the Soviets at Reykjavik? Does my right hon. Friend agree that for General-Secretary Gorbachev to make the abandonment of SDI a precondition for arms control progress was a dangerous step on his part, as the whole world was looking forward to an early sumit in the United States, with an agenda settled at Reykjavik and agreed by both sides?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct to suggest that had President Reagan agreed to the one condition that the Soviet Union and Mr. Gorbachev tried to lay down at Reykjavik he would have given away the right of the West to research into those matters while leaving the Soviet Union free to continue to do so. My hon. Friend is right in thinking that that would be a dangerous mistake and we should be grateful to President Reagan for not agreeing to it.

Mr. Mason: In the wake of the Reykjavik conference and the briefing that the Prime Minister received from Mr. Gorbachev's special emissary — a report which the Secretary of State for Defence must have read—to what extent was the SDI barrier responsible for the breakdown of the talks? If the SDI is so important, what are the prospects of any arms reductions between East and West and further talks?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's point. At present it is not clear whether the Soviet Union is mainly worried about the precise definition of research and getting a tighter limit upon that, or whether it will be so completely opposed to the SDI programme in any conceivable circumstances that that will be a stopping point to any progress. I hope that that is not the case, but it is one matter that must be explored at Geneva.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend spell out the new projects on which British scientisits are engaged in this area and what advantages are likely to accrue to Britain as a result? Is it not sensible that Britain should be involved in anti-missile defence? Will that give us some chance of playing a part in the decision whether the project could be implemented in the next century?

Mr. Younger: I cannot give precise details of each project in which British firms are involved. At present about $17 million worth of business is coming to British firms as part of the SDI programme. My hon. Friend is right to suggest that such research, in which British firms are participating, is trying only to establish whether such techniques will be important for the defensive shield of the West in future.

Mr. Denzil Davies: In an earlier answer the right hon. Gentleman said that it was the British Government's view that arms should be reduced. As President Reagan offered at Reykjavik to get rid of all strategic nuclear weaponry within 10 years, will the right hon. Gentleman say whether the British Government were consulted on that offer and whether they approve of and agree with it?

Mr. Younger: The British Government were closely, effectively and constantly consulted in the preparations for the Reykjavik summit. I could not possibly have expected any closer consultation than there was. During the two days of the summit, the discussions naturally had to be conducted between those who were present, not others who were then in America or in Europe. It has always been the British Government's objective to achieve reductions in arms. If, in due course, taking into account all factors, including conventional and chemical weapons, we could approach a period of big reductions or even zero weapons, we would be prepared to take part in that process. But we are not prepared to accept only one part of it on its own.

2. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any British officials or scientists were present at the recent American testing of SDI equipment in the Nevada desert.

Mr. Younger: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the nuclear test that was carried out in the Nevada desert on 16 October and which has been confirmed publicly by the United States Department of Energy. No British officials or scientists were present.

Mr. Hughes: Is it true that the SDI scuppered the Reykjavik disarmament talks and that further star wars tests mean further nuclear tests to determine the feasibility of the X-ray system? When will the Government realise that if they want disarmament and a comprehensive test ban treaty, the sooner they get off the Reagan bandwagon the better?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. There has been no suggestion that that nuclear test was related to the strategic defence initiative. The Americans have made it clear that they abide by the anti-ballistic missile treaty and, therefore, no nuclear tests in space would be permitted as part of the research into the SDI programme. The hon. Gentleman's question falls on both parts. As for the ending of the Reykjavik summit, the reason why agreement was almost achieved but was not reached was the insistence of the Soviet Union that the Americans should abandon their SDI research, while leaving the Soviet Union free to do its own. That was an extraordinarily bad bargain, which President Reagan was right to refuse.

Mr. Marlow: If Britain were to adopt the defence policy, or lack of policy, which has been sold to the Labour party by Mrs. Ruddock and Mrs. Kinnock, would we not find that, with no Americans in Europe and with no nuclear weapons in Western Europe, the only way that we could defend ourselves would be with our own SDI?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend may well be right on that point. If the British Government had followed the policies advocated by the CND, the Labour party and others, we should be left now with the Soviet Union not being prepared to negotiate on any aspect of cruise missiles and we should have the SS20s pointed towards us in western Europe, with nothing to counter them. It seems to me that this episode is a complete demolition of the whole theory upon which the CND is based.

Mr. Douglas: The Secretary of State has twice alluded to Soviet breaches of treaty obligations. Have the Soviets in any way breached the ABM treaty, and has this matter been raised by the United States with the Soviet Union?

Mr. Younger: On a point of correction, I do not think that I have suggested at any time this afternoon that the Soviet Union has breached the ABM treaty, and I make no such suggestion now. I understand that both sides are prepared to keep within the ABM treaty, but that there is some dispute as to the precise definition of what it involves.

Rolls-Royce plc

3. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the total value of all contracts recently placed by his Department with Rolls-Royce plc, both in terms of money and estimated man hours.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Archie Hamilton): The total value of contracts placed by the Ministry of Defence with Rolls-Royce plc in the first six months of the current financial year amounts to £100 million. However, much of our business with the company, such as RB199 engines for Tornado, is contracted for internationally. We expect our total business this year with the company to amount to about £500 million. It is not possible, I am afraid, to provide a reliable estimate of the man hours involved, though clearly Ministry of Defence business with Rolls-Royce plc sustains a substantial number of jobs.

Mr. Stern: I congratulate my hon. Friend both on the answer and on the fact that he has delivered it. In view of the substantial business from his Department to Rolls-Royce plc this year, on top of the substantial orders that it already holds on behalf of his Department, does he agree that the work force of Rolls-Royce plc need have no fears whatsoever as to their future employment, whether in state or private hands?

Mr. Hamilton: Those employees of Rolls-Royce plc whom I have met relish the idea of privatisation. They foresee themselves as shareholders and coming out from under Government control.

Mr. Park: If Rolls-Royce plc is to continue to gain contracts, does the Minister agree that it will be necessary for it to maintain and even to expand its research and development? Will Government support be forthcoming for research and development if Rolls-Royce plc is privatised?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. Government support will continue to be forthcoming for research and development in Rolls-Royce plc, whatever the ownership.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I congratulate my hon. Friend on taking up his post as Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement. Will he confirm that the order for the Rolls-Royce RB199 engines for Tornado will include the follow-on order, the attrition order for the Royal Air Force, which was reduced by the sale of Tornados to Saudi Arabia? Will he assure me that it is included in that particular order? What is more, if it is not included in that order, I assure my hon. Friend that he will be under even greater pressure than he is now.

Mr. Younger: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. I assure him that we anticipate that the combination of our orders for the RB199, together with those from the Saudis, will take sales through into the mid-1990s.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that at my meeting with the trade union representatives at Rolls-Royce, Parkside—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Give the hon. Member a chance.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that at my meeting yesterday with the trade union representatives at Rolls-Royce, Parkside, in Coventry I was told that the proportion of workers opposed to privatisation was about 80 to 85 per cent.? Given the Prime Minister's oft-stated premise that defence is of the highest national priority, would not the privatisation of Rolls-Royce mean that money from the Defence Department would result not only in £500 million being spent on engines but in money being spent on the propping up and subsidisation of shareholders' dividends? How does that equate with the Prime Minister's statement that defence is a national priority?

Mr. Hamilton: We are convinced that the privatisation of Rolls-Royce will give the Ministry of Defence better value for money. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the national interest, but many defence suppliers are already in the private sector, and they play an equally important role.

Arms Sales (Register)

4. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to set up a register of arms sales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No, Sir.

Mr. Hughes: Is it not inconsistent of the Government to deny the public any opportunity of seeing in the House or outside, the applications made for arms sales, let alone knowing the criteria on which those arms exports are made, when only two years ago the Government's representative at the United Nations study on conventional arms argued for an international arms register? That was blocked by the Soviet Union. However, our allies, the United States, have a public debate in Congress before deciding major arms sales. Should the Government not be consistent both with their allies and with their other more private activities?

Mr. Hamilton: The Government consider that they have a great safeguard in that any defence equipment needs an Export of Goods (Control) Order before it can be shipped. We are satisfied that that provides the safeguard that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

Mr. Whitfield: I welcome my hon. Friend's reply to that question. Is he aware that it is official Labour party policy, with which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) presumably agrees, to disband the Defence Export Services Organisation as part of trying to bring the sales of all arms under closer political control? Is not such a policy wholy repugnant to the many thousands of people who work in the defence and arms industries in Britain, and to our allies in NATO, including Turkey, which, according to that policy, is classed, for some extraordinary reason, as a repressive nation?

Mr. Hamilton: It is remarkable that it is Labour party policy to disband the Defence Export Services Organisation, especially as it was set up by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). Indeed, that was one of his better acts as Secretary of State for Defence. When it comes to defence export sales, we are talking about 120,000 jobs in Britain being at stake. We should not dismiss that lightly.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box. On the question of arms sales by British contractors, has he seen the file and appendices that I submitted during the recess to the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on excess profits being made on defence contracts by Thorn EMI and Dowty-Rotol, and Aish and company? Has the hon. Gentleman examined that document, and when may I expect a ministerial reply setting out acceptance of the need to compensate whistleblowers on excess profits where they are being made?

Mr. Hamilton: I am aware of that document, and I know that it is being investigated. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can expect a reply before very long.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Will my hon. Friend reconsider his position? If we had an arms sales register, we could constantly remind the British people of the enormous contribution by the defence industries to our overall export drive. In particular, we could remind them of the record £5,000 million deal—the biggest export deal ever — which was secured by British Aerospace, this Government and our Prime Minister.

Mr. Hamilton: I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend, but many of the deals are confidential as between the supplier and the recipient and some countries would not want all the deals that we make with them to be made public.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister consider widening the suggestion? It would help taxpayers to know just how many contracts go to privatised firms which are not only not British, but do not provide jobs in any form in this country?

Mr. Hamilton: It remains an objective of the Ministry of Defence to get the best value for money. We cannot restrict ourselves to British suppliers if we are to do that.

NATO Bases

5. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what controls Her Majesty's Government have over North Atlantic Treaty Organisation bases in the United Kingdom.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): All bases in the United Kingdom that are used by other NATO allies remain in British ownership and their use is subject to the agreement of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister publish a list of designated NATO bases in this country and the rules under which they are used by other armed forces? In the event of the United States or any other NATO country wishing to use a base to bomb another country without the approval of the British Government, would the British Government be able to stop it if they wished?

Mr. Stanley: We publish in *Hansard*, in response to questions by hon. Members, details of bases that are occupied by the United States forces in this country. As was made quite clear, there can be no question of nuclear weapons being fired from British soil without the consent of the British Prime Minister. We have made it clear also, following the events in relation to Libya, that there are no circumstances in which American aircraft based in this country may be used without our consent in military operations planned by the United States.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: Has my right hon. Friend yet received a report on the ambush of a military convoy from a British base in the early hours of this morning? Is he aware that it will cause great concern among people in this country that such an event can take place? Will my right hon. Friend assure us that he is satisfied that similar incidents can be prevented in future? Have the perpetrators been apprehended?

Mr. Stanley: I have received a report on the events to which my hon. Friend referred. I understand that some arrests were made. I think my hon. Friend will recognise that the police and service men involved showed immense patience and restraint. I assure my hon. Friend that in very different international circumstances from those today we would have to take a different attitude towards the protection of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Did the Minister's original response also relate to United Kingdom territorial waters? Have there been any accidents with United States nuclear submarines in the past 12 months?

Mr. Stanley: My previous answer also related to nuclear weapons fired from within British territorial waters.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us would like Her Majesty's Government to have more control over the security surrounding NATO bases than was shown by half-baked local authorities such as Cambridgeshire, whose failure to enforce the law against the mob of CND and other odd-balls is as infuriating to the residents as it is dangerous to the security of the nation?

Mr. Stanley: I sympathise with my hon. Friend's point. He will be aware that, thanks to his and the Government's efforts, security at Greenham Common and at Molesworth is very much better today than it was some time ago.

Independent Nuclear Deterrent

6. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the maintenance of the independent nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Younger: The independent strategic nuclear deterrent will remain vital to our security and to the security of our NATO partners for a long time to come. That is why we took the decision in 1980 to purchase the Trident system, which will provide an effective and credible deterrent well into the 21st century.

Mr. Leigh: Whatever may or may not have been the options in the past, is it not a fact that if, like the leader of the Social Democratic party, one professes a belief in the maintenance of the independent nuclear deterrent, one

can see no viable alternative to Trident capable of providing a successor to Polaris in time? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the electorate will take a dim view of any electoral alliance which not only cannot agree whether there should be a successor or what that successor should be but, furthermore, rejects the only viable alternative? That sort of policy is intellectual dishonesty of the highest order.

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is no doubt that any political party asking for support from the electorate must have a credible defence policy. It is clear that there is no way of replacing the Polaris system, which will be credible to any potential aggressor from the mid-1990s onwards, other than with the Trident system. I hope that all concerned will now come to terms with that fact and support it.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: In what conceivable circumstances can our so-called independent nuclear deterrent be used?

Mr. Younger: We have made it clear that the possession of our independent nuclear deterrent should be available as a last-resort response in any future circumstance in which such a response by this country is needed. If that protection were abandoned, this country would be at the mercy of a vastly superior conventional attack. The hon. Gentleman and his party are backing a very dangerous defence policy in abandoning that protection.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the difficulties of the zero-zero option is that it does not include those Third World powers that have already developed or are developing atomic and nuclear weapons? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, to defend ourselves from that potential danger, we need to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent?

Mr. Younger: We have made it perfectly clear that none of our weapons—whether nuclear or non-nuclear—will ever be used as a first-strike weapon and that, therefore, this country's adoption of the independent nuclear deterrent is a safeguard available to a British Government to use against any threat in the future. The necessity to have that response has been agreed policy between all Governments since the war, Labour as well as Conservative. I hope that that will be the case in future.

Mr. Wallace: If, in the next five to six years, the Soviet Union and the United States were able to agree a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic nuclear missiles, will it be the policy of the Conservative party, if re-elected to office, to deploy a missile system which represents an eightfold increase in the present Polaris system, or are there circumstances in which the Government would be prepared to negotiate away Trident, and if so, what are they?

Mr. Younger: If the United States and the Soviet Union were to agree on such a thing, it would be more than the Liberal party has been able to do with its defence policy. If there were large reductions in strategic weapons of the size suggested by the hon. Gentleman—50 per cent. or so—the Government would be perfectly prepared to go along with the search for such reductions, but if it were anything further, we would require conventional and other weapons systems which are a threat to us to be taken into account.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to abandon Britain's nuclear deterrent and to expel American nuclear bases from this country would not only lead to the break-up of NATO and undermine our relationships with the United States but, in effect, would pose the greatest threat to peace in Europe since the war?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct. There is no doubt that the destabilising effect of the possibilities described by my hon. Friend would be a grave danger to world peace and put us in greater danger than we are at the moment. It is only the certainty felt by any aggressor who thought of attacking this country that that would be the response, which it could not contemplate, that has kept us safe for more than 40 years. If the policy is allowed to continue, it will keep the peace for very many years into the future.

Mr. McNamara: On the basis of the answers just given by the Secretary of State, are we now to assume that it is the Government's policy that in no circumstances will they be prepared to see the United Kingdom give up its deterrent and that, therefore, we will maintain a deterrent, no matter what the United States does, while there are strong conventional forces in the USSR? In fact, it is now a deterrent not against nuclear blackmail but against conventional forces.

Mr. Younger: We have always made it perfectly clear that in present circumstances we consider that the possession of an independent deterrent by this country is essential to our security. As I have said, that has been the view of Labour as well as Conservative Governments. That point should be pondered by the hon. Gentleman. We have always made it clear that if there were large reductions in strategic systems and no development of any new weapons as a threat to us we would be prepared to consider whether we would contribute to further reductions thereafter.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the basic reasons behind the decision at which he has arrived and which he has made openly are the same as those behind the decision made by the Labour party—without telling the House of Commons—to go for Chevaline and update the deterrent? Are not the arguments precisely the same, except that we are deciding openly and making the announcement frankly to the whole country?

Mr. Younger: My hon. and learned Friend may well be right, although, of course, I am not privy to the inner secrets of previous Labour Governments. I certainly agree with my hon. and learned Friend and the implication of his comments, which is that if the Labour party thinks that it is safe to embark upon a policy of abandoning the nuclear deterrent and throwing out our American allies with their NATO nuclear bases in this country, it is taking an extremely dangerous step which will make war more likely, not less so.

Amphibious Ships

7. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the replacement of the Royal Navy's amphibious ships.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Good progress is being made in our examination of the way ahead for our amphibious capacity and my right hon. Friend will make an announcement before the end of the year.

Mr. Dixon: Will the Minister ensure that there is no further slippage in the placement of these orders? Will he also ensure that none of these are sacrificed to pay for the Trident programme?

Mr. Hamilton: At present we are not talking about orders, but are considering the whole question of replacing our present capacity.

Mr. Soames: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend to the foothills of immortality. Does he agree that it is self-evidently true that we can no longer retain a 50-ship fleet? What steps are his Department taking to rethink the tasks and deployment of a future greatly reduced Royal Navy?

Mr. Hamilton: We do not anticipate that the Royal Navy will be reduced to the extent to which my hon. Friend refers. I have every confidence that we shall be able to maintain a 50-ship fleet.

Mr. O'Neill: I welcome the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement to his new responsibility. Can he be more specific as to what his colleague will be telling us by the end of the year? Will it be just another piece of delaying tactics about ordering? Will we enter the year 1987-88 before we hear anything positive about amphibious craft orders, or will there be further delaying tactics while we have to pay the price of Trident?

Mr. Hamilton: I thank he hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks. I cannot anticipate the statement, but when it comes it will be quite definitive about what we intend to do. It will not be a delaying tactic.

Road Accidents (Leicestershire)

8. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many road accidents have occurred in the county of Leicestershire involving military vehicles during the last 12 months.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): My Department maintains statistics centrally on road traffic accidents involving military vehicles by parent unit and not by county. The information by county could be provided only by checking with every unit in the country.

Mr. Janner: In that case, will the Minister tell the House how many accidents have occurred in the country during the past year involving military vehicles, and in how many of those cases the vehicles were carrying nuclear weapons?

Mr. Freeman: As regards the latter part of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question, for security reasons we cannot depart from the principles followed for many years by successive Labour and Conservative Governments and release information on the arrangements governing the movement of nuclear weapons. As regards the information he requested about accidents involving military vehicles, the answer is that in the year ended 31 March 1986 there were five fatalities involving military vehicles.

Mr. Lilley: Is my hon. Friend aware that a few days ago a military convoy allegedly carrying nuclear weapons heading in the direction of Leicestershire passed through St. Albans, thereby breaching the lorry ban zone covering that city? In view of the fact that our noble Friend in another place has previously apologised for a similar incursion into the lorry ban zone, will he investigate the incident and seek to ensure that it does not occur again?

Mr. Freeman: As I have already said, and as I hope my hon. Friend will appreciate, we do not comment on the movement of nuclear weapons. As regards any infringement of road traffic regulations, I would be glad to look into any allegation concerning military convoys or military vehicles and write to my hon. Friend.

F111 Aircraft (Low Flying)

9. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints his Department has received concerning low-flying F111 aircraft during the past year.

Mr. Freeman: Records are not maintained in the precise form requested, but 88 complaints and inquiries were received in the Ministry of Defence between November 1985 and October 1986 relating to aircraft from stations in Great Britain where United States Air Force F111s are based.

Mr. Thomas: Bearing in mind the number of such complaints, will the Minister tell us what contribution the United Kingdom Government are making to the NATO working party on aircraft noise in modern society? Will he assure the House that the Government will not prevent the development within NATO of the kinds of standards the West Germans insist on, which apply to West German aircraft and aircraft operating over West Germany?

Mr. Freeman: The regulations governing low-flying in Germany are different from those that apply in this country. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the German Government restrict low flying to specific areas. Since 1979, following an initiative by the then Labour Government, which we have followed ever since, we do not restrict low-flying aircraft to any specific areas. We allow them to fly anywhere in the country, with the exception of built-up areas, civil air traffic control zones and over most hospitals.

Mr. Baldry: Does my hon. Friend agree that the people of this country would rather have the occasional low-flying plane, knowing that every such plane is a friend and is intent upon the proper defence of this country, than no effective allied deterrent in the sky?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right. There is a great need for low-flying training in the Royal Air Force and the United States Air Force, because the perceived threat involves the training of our pilots and American pilots in the techniques of low flying.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Is the Minister aware that every time a fighter aircraft crashes killing the crew, such as the German fighter that crashed in Northumberland only last week, it instils great fear in the countryside community of this country? Could we do more of the low-flying training of our pilots, which is obviously necessary, in much more sparsely populated areas of countries overseas?

Mr. Freeman: Our aircraft are required in Britain and western Europe. Therefore, we are severely constrained as

to where the aircraft can train regularly. There has been only one civilian fatality—one too many—in the past 10 years involving low-flying aircraft.

Work Force Dispersal

10. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to disperse the civilian work force of his Department from the south to the north of England.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As the House is aware, we are constantly searching for opportunities to secure a more even spread of defence employment across the regions. However, all proposals will need to stand on their economic and operational merits.

Mr. Holt: I add my congratulations to those of others to my hon. Friend at the Dispatch Box. However, having heard his answer, I must ask for how much longer the melting pot is going to be melted before somebody recognises that there is a north of England, especially south Teesside. Langbaurgh especially comes to mind. We would like defence work in that area.

Mr. Hamilton: We are well aware that there is a north of England and that there is a Scotland as well. In 1979 we announced that 1,400 jobs would be transferred to Glasgow, and 1,330 of those have gone and have resulted in 1,000 jobs being recruited locally. We are very mindful of the needs of the north-east, and the representations made by my hon. Friend will be taken into account.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Minister aware that nothing exposes the Government's hypocrisy concerning unemployment in the north more than their failure to transfer Civil Service jobs to the region? Is the Minister aware that since 1979, when the Government came to power, not a single Civil Service job has been transferred, in spite of the recommendations of the Hardman report? Will he set an example by acceding to the request of his hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) and transferring defence jobs to the region?

Mr. Hamilton: We are well aware of the needs of the north-east and we are looking all the time at what jobs can be moved. I hope that we will be able to do something to satisfy the hon. Gentleman before long.

Sir John Farr: Is my hon. Friend aware that a sensible compromise would be to centralise all the facilities in the midlands, especially in Leicester, where we have the Army pay and records office? Many millions of pounds could be saved annually by centralising that facility.

Mr. Hamilton: We shall certainly take my hon. Friend's representations to heart, but I would prefer to write to him about that.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Minister say how many jobs have been lost in the north in Army bases and elsewhere as a result of the MOD privatising many jobs?

Mr. Hamilton: When privatisation takes place it normally results in a certain number of jobs being replaced by others, so although they are lost in the Civil Service, they are not lost to the area.

Civilian Manpower

11. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-British civilians are employed by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 168,000 civil servants employed by the Ministry of Defence in the United Kingdom and about 30,000 locally engaged civilians overseas. Information is not held centrally as to how many are non-British and it would be prohibitively expensive to collect it.

Candidates for the Civil Service must meet certain nationality and residence rules in order to be eligible for consideration for a post and each case is individually examined at the time of application.

Mr. Yeo: Bearing in mind the great cost of unemployment to British taxpayers, albeit a cost which arises in a Department different from that in which my hon. Friend has recently and happily assumed responsibilities, can he assure the House that the most careful consideration is given, whenever a non-British citizen is appointed, to the alternative of appointing a British citizen, from whatever part of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hamilton: The qualifications for appointments within the United Kingdom are that people should have been in this country for a long time, so it is only in exceptional circumstances that foreigners are employed.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Foulkes: Has the Prime Minister seen today the report of the serious concern expressed in Europe and the United States of America, as well as throughout Latin America, at the unilateral announcement of a Falklands fisheries zone? As it is in our interests to get an internationally accepted agreement on fisheries and to do nothing to undermine democracy in Argentina, will she think again about this hasty and ill-considered decision?

The Prime Minister: The decision was absolutely right. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, we have been trying through the Food and Agriculture Organisation to secure a multilateral agreement on fisheries with Argentina. We first took an initiative in April 1985, but it was delayed by Argentina. Eventually Argentina signed bilateral agreements which purported to regulate fishing in waters over which the Falklands are entitled to exercise jurisdiction. Faced with that, we took our action. It was correct and, indeed, necessary to exercise jurisdiction over those waters.

Mr. Fallon: Is my right hon. Friend aware that most parents will regard the teachers' pay award of 16 per cent. as reasonable, generous and fair? Will she reassure the House that the Government will protect children from any further disruption of their schooling?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the offer made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is, as he said, fair, reasonable and, indeed, generous. Indeed, with the latest offer it would mean that Scottish teachers had had about

a 30 per cent. increase in pay over the past two and a half years. Many parents would wish to have a similar increase, and they have every right to expect that their children will be properly and fully educated.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister condemn the manic efforts of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to suborn the BBC by his smears and menaces, or is he acting under her orders?

The Prime Minister: The matter raised with the BBC is a straightforward one of whether the BBC is honouring the terms of its charter and its licence and agreement which it signed after the charter some time in 1981. A complaint has been made to the BBC. It is not for us to discuss it, it is now for the BBC to reply.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister is incredible. Is she trying to say that her creature — which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster most definitely is — is acting in a straightforward fashion? Is this not the most tortuous attempt to try to intimidate the BBC because it is not manipulating the news in the way that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster would like?

The Prime Minister: It may be that the right hon. Gentleman has read the submission, but from what he has said it does not seem that he has. If he has, he will have seen that it refers to the terms and conditions under which the BBC broadcasts, and a complaint has been made. It seems to me a matter of fact for the governors to consider. It is only they who can decide and reply to that complaint. It was a fairly measured complaint, which the right hon. Gentleman will see if he reads the submission.

Mr. Kinnock: I have read the submission. It is not a complaint, which is right; it is coercion, which is entirely wrong.

The Prime Minister: It is a matter for the governors, and only the governors, to see whether the charter, and the licence and the agreement have been honoured. It is not for us to have an argument on this matter. A complaint has been made and it is for the governors to reply.

Q2. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 November 1986.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hirst: May I remind my right hon. Friend that the people of Scotland are anxiously awaiting confirmation that the Queen's Speech next week will contain proposals for legislation to reform the thoroughly discredited and unfair rating system in Scotland? Can she reassure me that they will not be disappointed?

The Prime Minister: I know how anxiously Scotland awaits this legislation and I gladly give my hon. Friend the reassurance he requires.

Dr. Owen: In view of her earlier reply, can the right hon. Lady tell the House whether the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was complaining to the BBC, or was his complaint made solely in his role as chairman of the Conservative party? If so, how are the two roles distinguished? Surely the real issue is that the board of governors are responsible for the BBC and it is they who should now reply to the Conservative party, and the Government should distance themselves from Mr. Tebbit's other role, in which he does not act as a member of the Government?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is correct — my right hon. Friend was acting as chairman of the Conservative party.

I have experience and know that if, on that basis, I refuse to answer all questions, rather a lot of noise ensues in the House.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is reported that teachers in Norwich are on strike today? Does she agree that this action by the teachers' unions is destroying support for the teachers' case and lowering the regard in which the teaching profession is held by right-thinking people in Britain?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I think that such action is utterly disgraceful and shows no regard whatsoever for the children who are in the care of the teachers. I believe that the offer that has been made is a very generous one and that most teachers would wish to accept it. I agree very much with my hon. Friend that if teachers wish to have their professional standards restored — that is our purpose — they should accept the offer and return to giving a full education to all our children.

Q3. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 November 1986.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Jarrow marchers arrived in London today to protest about unemployment and to defend their right to work? Is she also aware that these marchers have now been on the march for four weeks? With regard to last week's statement, does she really think that the marchers should lose their benefit because they are not available for employment?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course I am aware of the march. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, unemployment benefit is paid to those who are genuinely available for work.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Lady is cruel.

The Prime Minister: The statement that has been made is the response to the criticisms made by the Public Accounts Committee of the existing arrangements. The new questionnaire applies the law——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Heartless.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is giving an answer.

The Prime Minister: The new questionnaire applies the law as the Labour Government reaffirmed it in the Social Security Act 1975, which said:

"a day shall not be treated in relation to any person—

(i) as a day of unemployment unless on that day he is capable of work and he is, or is deemed in accordance with regulations to be available to be employed in employed earner's employment".

— *[Interruption.]* — Of course Opposition Members make a noise. They do not like the facts read out.

Mr. Couchman: During her busy day yesterday, did my right hon. Friend have a chance to read the report in *The Daily Telegraph* about the extraordinary happenings on Manchester city council? Does she agree that a council which behaves in that thoroughly intolerable way deserves the sort of support——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister can answer questions only on matters for which she has responsibility.

Q4. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Prime Minister aware that two weeks ago the Employment Select Committee visited Japan, a country to which the Prime Minister would possibly refer as being very successful, where we were advised that inflation is now standing at zero, but in spite of that they paid a 4·7 per cent. wage increase this year? Is the Prime Minister aware that when we met the industrialists they advised us that they were borrowing money from the banks for industrial development at 4½ per cent.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules must apply. The Prime Minister can answer questions only on matters for which she is responsible.

Q5. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McNamara *rose*—

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Eastham: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order afterwards.

Mr. Eastham *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall deal with that afterwards.

Mr. McNamara: The Prime Minister will recall that when the decision was taken on the dual track to have cruise and Pershing in this country it was on the ground that it would force the Russians to the table and make them take out the SS20s. Now that the Russians under Secretary-General Gorbachev, and the Americans under President Reagan, have agreed that the SS20s and cruise and Pershings should go, why is she running to the United States to see President Reagan and saying that she did not really mean it and, please, can she keep those weapons here?

The Prime Minister: The matter of the intermediate nuclear forces has to be negotiated, as the hon. Member knows, in Geneva. That is the only place where agreement can be reached. Her Majesty's Government welcome the progress made on INF at Reykjavik. It is consistent with the long-standing Alliance position that INF must be dealt with on a global basis. A zero-zero solution in Europe with some long-range intermediate nuclear forces in Asia is acceptable provided that the disparity is not to great. It is also the well-known Alliance position that the problem of the short-range intermediate nuclear forces must also be addressed because they were put in the satellite countries in response to cruise and Pershing, which themselves were in response to the SS20. The whole thing must be thoroughly and properly worked out.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend, during her very busy day, have a word with the Secretary of State for Defence about the Royal Air Force's need for an advanced early warning system? Will she accept that if that order is not placed with GEC Avionics and British Aerospace it will be a dreadful blow for Britain's manufacturing industry, a further blow for unemployment and a kick in the teeth for British technology?

The Prime Minister: Of course one would wish orders to go to Britain. They have to be won on merit, and the important thing is whether the services which that aircraft and early warning system provide are acceptable on the ground of competence to the Royal Air Force and all the forces who use it.

Q7. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether, in the course of her busy involvement in the pressurising of the BBC by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, she found time to read the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the standards of conduct in public life?

The Prime Minister: I have, I believe, sufficiently answered the hon. Gentleman's question.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. To forestall any possible points of order, I should tell the House that I stopped the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) from asking a question about what went on in the Manchester city council — *[Interruption.]* The Prime Minister is not responsible. I must apply the rules equally to both sides of the House.

Mr. Eastham *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman will do me the courtesy of reading in *Hansard* what he said, I think he will see that had he framed his question in a rather different way it would have been in order.

Mr. Eastham *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. From all that I heard, he was saying about Japan very much the same kind of thing as the hon. Member for Gillingham was saying about Manchester.

Mr. Eastham *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. There has been a tendency in recent days for the Prime Minister to be asked questions on matters for which she is not responsible. I think we ought to get back to the traditional rules.

Mr. Shore: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. All questions to the Prime Minister are prefaced, to a greater of lesser extent, by paving material in order to put the question, and my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) was precisely paving the way to ask a question about Britain's economic performance compared with that of Japan, which the Prime Minister, as First Lord of the Treasury, is perfectly capable of answering, and for which she is responsible.

Mr. Eastham *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me forestall all this. I shall read carefully what the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) said, and, indeed, what the hon.

Member for Gillingham said, although my recollection is that in prefacing his question the hon. Member said "Did the Prime Minister, in the course of her busy day yesterday consider . . . " Allow me to reflect on the matter. I am simply telling the House that I must apply the same rules to both sides and that we should get back to the position of asking the Prime Minister about matters for which she has direct responsibility.

Mr. Eastham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) has sought to do no more and no less than to encourage the BBC to be impartial——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That seems the sort of question that might well be asked of a Minister, but not of me.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to ask for your guidance on the rights of Back Benchers in the House. It arises specifically from the next item, a private notice question about unemployment, an issue which any Opposition Member can and does raise any day of the week. I put in an application this morning to ask you about——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that if he put in an application to me for a private notice question he must not raise the matter in the House.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am asking for legitimate guidance from you, Mr. Speaker in the Chair. Why is it that an issue of great importance to the integrity of Britain, about whether someone is sent abroad in a crate, whether to Israel or to Nigeria, is not allowed while a private notice question about unemployment, which can be asked at any time, is in order? Why are Back Benchers ignored while matters coming from the Front Bench are allowed?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a very unworthy statement by the hon. Gentleman, who well knows that I treat the Front Benches and the Back Benches with an equal and even hand. The hon. Gentleman has not even heard the private notice question.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Answer the question.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I cannot answer a question about the chairman of the Conservative party. That is what the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) asked about.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Yes, but I did not.

Mr. Eastham *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Sir Kenneth Lewis *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will call Mr. Eastham first.

Mr. Eastham: On a point of order Mr. Speaker. May I seek clarification? I asked the Prime Minister to make some comparisons between the Japanese economy and the disastrous British economy, but you ruled me out of order and did not give me an opportunity to pose my question. What is the reason for such conduct?

Mr. Speaker: I have explained that to the hon. Gentleman. I have said that I will read carefully in *Hansard* what he said. I did not hear him preface his remarks with, "In the course of her busy day" or anything like that. May I say to the House that if, on any day, I feel that I have been unfair to any hon. Member, I have ways of putting that straight, and I always do so.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, have you noticed that there are 139 questions down today to the Prime Minister? My right hon. Friend is in great demand to answer questions on every subject under the sun, and she does it very well. May I ask my right hon. Friend to consider, instead of answering questions for a quarter of an hour twice a week, answering them for half a day in order to get rid of the backlog.

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: We have a busy day ahead of us, but I will take it.

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This, oddly enough, is a genuine point of order. You made some comments a little earlier drawing to the attention of the House the fact that questions to the Prime Minister should have some relevance to her responsibilities. Of course, this House does not expect any longer any real answers from the Prime Minister. Would it not test the subtlety of Members of the House if you were to reinstitute the former requirement, which I think has been abandoned under your Speakership, that the questions should be prefaced by some relevance to her activities on the day on which the question is put? That old practice has increasingly been abandoned and it would be healthy for the skills of the House and a sensible return to old practice if there were a requirement to preface the question by considering today whatever the relevance of the question is.

Mr. Speaker: That is exactly the point that I was seeking to make. The hon. Gentleman makes it clearly for me and I thank him.

Mr. Adley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I try to be helpful over this matter of Prime Minister's questions? The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made a fair point about paving questions, and we all know that occasionally some of us become a little long-winded in putting our paving questions. In these days of modern technology, might not a device be put to work to help you, Mr. Speaker, of the sort that is used at Wimbledon that causes bells to ring? If Members cannot get their paving questions out in the first 100 words, a bell would ring and you, Mr. Speaker, would tell them to sit down.

Mr. James Callaghan: I was wondering, Mr. Speaker, whether, to help us phrase our questions correctly, you could advise us how to distinguish between the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster requesting the BBC to act impartially and fairly and the chairman of the Conservative party sending a bullying letter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the right hon. Gentleman knows from his long experience, I am in no way responsible to the chairmen of political parties. I am responsible, however, for Ministers in this place when they come to the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member wishes to raise a point of order I shall take it, but it must be a point of order and not a spoof.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry that I misled you earlier, but I was going on to say, had I been given the chance to do so, that earlier this afternoon the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), with great venom, referred to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by his ordinary name in making a cheap point about broadcasting. Surely we are to return to the niceties of this place.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I judged that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) was referring to the Minister in his capacity as chairman of a party and not as a Member of the House.

Unemployment Benefit (Claimant Advisers)

3.42 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Paymaster General what targets for reductions in the number of benefit recipients are being laid down for claimant advisers in his Department.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): None, Sir.

Mr. Prescott: I hope that the Paymaster General is aware that that is an unsatisfactory answer in the light of his statement to the House last Tuesday, when he clearly informed the House that the cost of 1,500 new officers could be paid for by a 2 per cent. reduction in claimants, thereby indicating that the Department has already done its homework on how many claimants have to be removed from benefit to pay for the new officers. Will he confirm that his intention in appointing 850 claimant advisers is to make new appointments, and will he confirm also that these appointments will be in addition to the 1,500 civil servants who are to administer directly the new work availability test?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that the 850 benefit advisers will be involved in checking on the unemployed who are to be subjected to the new work test? Will he tell the House why, when he was forced into the House last Tuesday to admit the existence of the new work test for the unemployed, he failed to announce an experiment for the disabled and the over-50s, and apparently failed also to tell the House that a new category of staff was already being appointed? Why has he refused to be open with the House about all the new measures that are directed towards the unemployed? Why does he insist on new measures against the unemployed when the country knows that the problem is the availability of work for the unemployed and not the availability of the unemployed for work?

Mr. Clarke: I shall deal first with the hon. Gentleman's point about my statement last week. I was asked questions last week by the hon. Gentleman and others about a new form that we have been trying out for some months without complaint, which we were introducing nationally to test availability for work. One of the hon. Gentleman's allegations was that the huge cost of taking on the extra staff for that purpose would not be justified by any savings made. What I said, as he has just reminded the House, is that if less than 2 per cent. of the register were to be saved by finding those who are not entitled to unemployment benefit, the cost would be covered. I did not imply that any target had been set down. It was an answer to an erroneous point and bad arithmetic on the hon. Gentleman's part.

As to the new hare that the Opposition have put up — the transfer of what were previously the unemployment review officers to our Department, where the posts are being filled by new claimant advisers — that move was announced to the House on 23 July in an answer by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, which is to be found in the *Official Report* for that day at column 305. When these unemployment review officers were in the Department of Health and Social Security, as my right hon. Friend said, they were responsible both for giving advice and help to unemployed people on finding work, and for preventing abuse. They always have been, and that is what they were during the last Administration as well as during the present Administration.

We are now appointing claimant advisers, who will have two functions. The first is to give advice and help to unemployed claimants to help them take up employment or training opportunities and the second is to ensure that unemployed claimants are available for work. That is all that this is about.

This latest and rather absurd allegation has arisen out of this morning's press report, and stems from a trade union official who was relying on the minutes of a meeting that apparently took place in Luton. It is said that at that meeting, one of our middle-ranking officers, who had only the minutes to go by, expressed the matter in a way that has no ministerial authority or approval. They are fulfilling a double purpose — the first to give advice to unemployed people on how to find work or how to get other benefits, and the second to check on availability for work, because this Administration have not given up their responsibility, any more than the last Administration did, for making sure that benefits are not paid to those who are not entitled to them.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that one of the consequences of the new Restart programme has been that a large number of people who have been unemployed for a long time have been amazed to discover the opportunities open to them? Will he take it from me that many people are extremely glad that we are getting back into personal contact with people who have been unemployed for a long time, and that personal advice to enable them to find their way back through the jungle of benefits and job opportunities is welcome?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The difficulty is that our opponents do not wish to accept that. If I appear somewhat breathless it is because I have just come to the House, having flown back here to answer this question, from a visit to Manchester. I was in one of our offices this morning, where I came across a Restart interview between an official and a young man who had come to the jobcentre for the first time for a long time. At random, I went up to him and spoke to him, and he was studying the details of a job that he thought that he might be able to do. All the staff in the office were pleased with the work they were doing with Restart and job clubs. The people whom I met felt that something was being done to help them. I felt like referring them all to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who is not only seeking to discredit our statistics—that is fair game — but running the risk of undermining the public perception of what we are doing to help long-term unemployed people. He and the Opposition should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): If the work of a claimant adviser causes somebody who had previously been denied unemployment benefit to start receiving it, will that be regarded as just as effective as getting somebody off the register who had previously been receiving benefit?

Mr. Clarke: Well, it would, but it is unlikely to happen because — *[Laughter.]* It is no good hon. Members

laughing. I was offered an easy point, which I shall not take. The people affected will usually be those who come to the benefit office and are receiving unemployment benefit. The whole point of the instructions that we have given to every grade of our staff is to help people where they can. We are now in a position to steer far more unemployed people back into work or training than we could before. We are putting a great deal of effort, at considerable public expense, into doing that. If at the same time our officials discover that there are some people claiming unemployment benefit who were never entitled to claim it, the average member of the public would think that we were mad if we told our officers to ignore that and to carry on giving the benefit because the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East will complain if we do not.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that he will receive widespread support from Conservative Members for the entire Restart programme, as it is the best initiative taken by his Department in recent years? Will he make every effort to ignore the rather trite and ignorant criticism from Opposition Front Bench Members, as they are clearly basing their criticism on title-tattle and one report from a particular DHSS office?

Mr. Clarke: Although I am a sensitive soul, I will take my hon. Friend's advice and allow the criticism to bounce off me. What worries me is the effect that it will have on the unemployed and the staff in our offices. Before the recess, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East spent all his time trying to persuade young school leavers not to go on the youth training scheme which he described as a skivvy scheme.

Mr. Prescott: It is a skivvy scheme.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is now trying to persuade the long-term unemployed not to go to our offices as they will be fiddled out of their benefits. He is doing much harm to positive programmes. Fortunately, those at whom the programmes are aimed seem to appreciate them more.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Will the Paymaster General take into account the experiences of some hon. Members who have had the pilot projects working in their constituencies during the past few weeks? They have discovered considerable bitterness among many of the unemployed, who consider that they have been hounded in pursuit of this questionnaire.

More particularly, will the Paymaster General give an assurance that those individuals who have been advised, because of their unavailability to work for health reasons, to come off unemployment benefit and seek an alternative benefit, will not be in any way disadvantaged for the time that it takes to prove that they are unavailable to work for health reasons? We have heard nothing about that.

Mr. Clarke: I am surprised by the hon. Gentleman's first point. As I said earlier, we have been piloting availability testing for months in, among other places, the city of Nottingham next door to my constituency. We have been piloting it near the hon. Gentleman's constituency. We informed Members of Parliament when we began the testing. It has gone on for months without my receiving a murmur of complaint from anyone. I do not know whether the hon. Member raised the matter with my Department, but he has not previously mentioned his anxiety to me. It was not until the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) made a great hoohah last weekend that we suddenly discovered that the Opposition considered that there was something wrong with the testing.

I shall consider the hon. Gentleman's second point. Of course, if people are entitled to sickness benefit, they should be referred to the DHSS and receive it. That enables me to underline the main point, that no one who needs benefit will fail to get it. We are not taking people off supplementary benefit or sickness benefit. No one in Britain is left to starve with no income. We are simply responding to an all-party Committee which considers that we should stop paying unemployment benefit to people who do not appear to qualify for it and responding to the public desire that we should not pay benefit to people who do not qualify for it and that we should give positive help to the unemployed. That has been the main point of all the programmes.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is it not time that we stopped mincing words on this subject? Is it not the case that up to 25 per cent. of those who have been called for a first Restart interview have miraculously disappeared from the benefit office and the unemployment figures? Is it not the case that over 800,000 people claim to be unemployed and are drawing benefit in the prosperous south-east of England — a figure twice as high as that for the whole nation 15 years ago? Is it not the case that the vast majority of British people support my right hon. and learned Friend's actions, and that the more that idiot on the Front Bench opposite goes on banging the Table——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the Minister answers, I should say that we do not have idiots in this House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes we do."] Well I say that we do not.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not know what is the appropriate word, but I certainly withdraw that.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend went a little over the top with his figure — I will check it — but certainly a proportion of those to whom we write do not reply and will not come in. There is also a proportion of people who stop claiming the moment they hear from us. Although I would not put it in quite the same way as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), if one talks to the average man and woman in the street one discovers that they do not believe that no one is claiming unemployment benefit who is not entitled to it. They tend to say that many such people are doing so. When, while carrying out these other policies, we encounter such people, either because they do not come in at all or they tell our office staff that they do not want jobs, we stop paying benefit. But it is absolutely absurd to say that stopping benefits in such circumstances, which is what the staff are supposed to do as part of their duties, is fiddling the figures.

Mr. Prescott: Of course, it is fiddling the figures.

Mr. Clarke: That also distorts the main aim of the policies, which is to find the people who are genuinely unemployed and give them more positive help than the system has given them for years.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I thank the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) for

[Mr. David Winnick]

giving the true Tory view on this subject. Does the Minister not realise how nauseating it is that a Government who have been mainly responsible for bringing back mass unemployment should give the impression that many of the unemployed do not wish to work? Is the Minister aware, for example, that when, not so long ago, a factory in Wolverhampton, near my constituency, had a few vacancies, over 500 people started to queue up for them from midnight onwards? That shows that the unemployed want to work and that this Government are denying them the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Clarke: I entirely accept that there are excessive numbers of genuinely unemployed people in this country. That is why we introduced the Restart programme and all the other measures that have been described. It is not the case that I have suggested that the majority of them are not genuinely unemployed. If, however, in the course of carrying out this positive work, cases are encountered where it is quite obvious from what people say that they are not entitled to the benefit that they are drawing, is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that the officials should be instructed by me and by my fellow Ministers to carry on paying out benefit? If so, he had better go and tell that to the Public Accounts Committee. The hon. Gentleman would certainly have a job accounting for that instruction to his electorate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question.

Detective Superintendent Lundy

3.56 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the allegation of serious corruption in the Metropolitan police."

It is specific, because I have an official Metropolitan police report, signed by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Steventon, Scotland Yard's most senior anti-corruption officer, that says:

"it is my belief that Mr. Lundy"—

that is, Detective Superintendent Lundy—

"is a corrupt officer who has long exploited his association with Garner"—

that is, Roy Garner. Deputy Sssistant Commissioner Steventon goes on to suggest that he believes that Detective Superintendent Lundy should be removed from specialist duty. Elsewhere in the report Deputy Assistant Commissioner Steventon says that grave doubts must be expressed as to the integrity of Mr. Lundy.

Since then, Detective Superintendent Anthony Lundy, Scotland Yard's most senior operational detective, has not only been approved for promotion but has also been appointed to head the new, elite special operations task force that is investigating the international laundering of £26 million of Brinks-Mat robbery money. This is equally relevant and important, because the report goes on to say that some of the evidence has been deduced from the silver bullion robbery and the Hatton Garden robbery; in respect of both of these cases the report suggests that Garner was not the informant that he was claimed to be and that he was merely exploiting the information that he had received from Lundy. The report continues:

"The position is further complicated in the case of the Silver Bullion Robbery in that both Garner and Lundy were closely associated with Leonard Gibson one of the principals convicted of the crime. Photographs have appeared in the press and on television showing all three with other criminals at social functions."

The matter is clearly extremely important, because corruption in the police force anywhere must obviously be a serious matter. It is true that the information contained in the "World in Action" programme was partly available before, in the "Brass Tacks" programme which the BBC chose not to broadcast, but no legal action has been taken against the "World in Action" programme.

More information has become available. Even today, I have received information about the names of the two officers who are alleged to have threatened either the careers or the lives of other senior police officers. I do not wish to name those officers at the moment, because first I want to check them out with other sources.

The matter is urgent, because the suggestion, as made in the "World in Action" programme last night and elsewhere, is that the offences may be continuing. It has been suggested to me that a serious drugs offence has already been partly started but that is is not being dealt with in the way in which it ought to be dealt with.

It has been very difficult to get this matter debated. In January 1986, I wrote to the Minister of State, Home Office, who in his reply to me simply said that he did not

consider that it was for him to look at these issues. Since then I have given the Home Secretary the opportunity to take up the matter, but without success.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I must ask the House to adjourn to discuss this matter, if only to protect the many police officers and members of the public who have approached me and asked me to make sure that it is brought to light and dealt with as an urgent and important matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"corruption at new Scotland Yard".

I listened with great care to the hon. Gentleman, but as he knows, my only duty is to decide whether this issue should have precedence over the business set down for consideration today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

BBC (Libel Action)

4.1 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that bogus points of order are not entirely unknown in this Chamber. Normally we tolerate them, because often they add to the gaiety of nations and augment the public stock of harmless pleasure. But that is not always so. You will know, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is the king of the bogus point of order, and that he has recently——

Hon. Members: You can't say that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can say it, but it is a bit provocative.

Mr. Hamilton: You will know, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for Workington is not the king of the bogus point of order.

Recently, through early-day motions and points of order, the hon. Gentleman has raised matters on the Floor of the House that attach to parliamentary privilege. He has used that means to utter various libels against me and my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), which were recently accepted by the BBC in a statement in open court as being totally without foundation. But as a result, of course, the newspapers have been able to pick them up, and with the use of qualified privilege have been able to repeat them. The BBC has thus with impunity, and on the basis of documents selectively leaked to friendly journalists by it, been able to try to refight through the newspapers the battle that it lost in court. All that is done without the protection afforded to litigants by the law of evidence. This has become trial by media on the back of what we might charitably call an extension of parliamentary privilege.

My point of order for you, Mr. Speaker, is to ask you whether there is no way in which you can protect the good name of the House and prevent the privileges of free speech in the House being used to impugn the integrity of its Members, under the cloak of parliamentary privilege.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for having given me notice that he intended to raise a point of order. As the House knows, an hon. Member cannot reflect on the conduct of another hon. Member, except on the basis of a substantive motion which admits of a distinctive vote of the House. I can say only that in making his allegations, the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) followed that course. What he has done is, in House of Commons terms, in order.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I personally have no cause to question the commitment of the hon. Members identified in my early-day motions to democratic principles. I personally know the hon. Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and, in particular, for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). Any suggestions that motions that I have tabled are to be interpreted as criticisms of their integrity or of their support for democratic arrangements are totally fallacious. References to incidents in Berlin are not intended to imply a connection with anti-democratic views. I have heard it said that what happened in Berlin may well have been a caper

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

that went wrong, thus nearly causing a diplomatic incident. I do not know — and we shall never know because the BBC settled out of court and halted the trial.

But I do know that great emphasis is being placed on the importance of the conflicting statements allegedly made by the hon. Member for Tatton. I think that the variations in his statements are unimportant, as they were made at different times, in different circumstances and under very different conditions. The activities of the hon. Members for Tatton, for Gainsborough and Horncastle and others are not important. They have never been the central issue in this affair.

The issue that concerns me is the reaction of Conservative Central Office to the revelations in the "Panorama" programme, and the heavy-handed and ruthless actions that Central Office took to deal with allegations of political extremism which it believed were potentially highly damaging to the Conservative party, and were therefore to be taken very seriously. That is the central question in this whole matter.

Central Office set about an elaborate attempt to interfere directly with potential witnesses. Attempts were made to manage and rig statements by Mr. David Mitchell. I repeat what I have said previously, but additionally I am able to say today that there is a tape in existence that confirms the nature of the conspiracy to hide the truth, and which identifies persons. Today I have sent a transcript of that tape to the Attorney-General. I have to inform you, Mr. Speaker, that it is but one of two tapes. I await a transcript of the second tape.

My reason for tabling early-day motions 1226, 1227 and 1238 is that they identify a person whom I know was nobbled by Central Office. It is unfortunate that, in the tabling of the early-day motions references had to be made to matters raised in the courts. That is where the hon. Member for Tatton and his hon. Friends have unfortunately had to be drawn into this matter by me. Nevertheless, it may have to happen again and again as further information will have to be brought into the public domain if I am to be able to prove interference with witnesses.

Hon. Members may ask why, after so much time, this should be important. It is important because the decision taken to nobble witnesses in the "Panorama" trial is linked directly with the decision of the Conservative party to squeeze and undermine the BBC's confidence and morale. It is the nobbling of witnesses that in part contributed to the withdrawal by the BBC and to the settlement out of court. BBC journalists today are looking over their shoulders in fear——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going into great detail. Will he come to a conclusion, as he has raised a point of order in answer to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton)?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I accept what you have said, Mr. Speaker.

The attacks of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) are disorienting the BBC's attempts at objective reporting. I and my many hon. Friends are deeply concerned that the great tradition of a totally free and independent BBC that is respected in every part of the world, is being eroded by crude intimidation from senior Conservatives. The whole nation should now rally in support of the BBC's independence.

Finally, this whole campaign to reveal interference with witnesses will continue while the right hon. Member for Chingford insists on destroying the BBC's independence. It is most unfortunate that the hon. Members for Tatton, for Gainsborough and Horncastle, and others should be drawn into this affair in this way.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) and I have been steadfast in our care throughout these legal proceedings not to abuse our position in the House in order to advance our case — a case which you will know put us at risk to the extent of £750,000.

I seek a ruling from you, Mr. Speaker, that you will not allow the abuse of privilege in the House. If that is not to be the case, we shall use the privilege that is afforded to us perhaps to reveal other things — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—that may not have emerged so far.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Do it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) will have heard the measured reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). When such early-day motions are put on the Order Paper, the greatest care is taken to ensure that they are in order and, indeed, they will not be on the Order Paper unless they are. What the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) did was, as I said, in House of Commons terms, in order, but every hon. Member must measure carefully and take responsibility for what he does in making accusations in motions about hon. Members, or in accusing others outside the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Does not your ruling demonstrate a point that many of us have tried to raise with you? We recognise that you have no powers, but for weeks or even months on end we cannot directly question the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Even when it is his turn to answer questions, it is for only five minutes. It demonstrates that when Parliament has been frustrated in this way there is no opportunity to question the Minister, or to debate the bullying and intimidation carried out against——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not for me to decide the length of questions to Ministers. If the hon. Member feels strongly about the matter, he may take it up through the usual channels, because it is through the usual channels that the allocation of Question Time is arranged.

BILL PRESENTED

SOCIAL SECURITY (LIMITATION OF BENEFIT)

Mr. Ralph Howell, supported by Sir William Clark, Dame Jill Knight, Sir Paul Hawkins, Sir John Biggs-Davison, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, Mr. Geoffrey Rippon, Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson, Mr. John Townend, Mr. Tony Favell, Mr. John Watts, and Mr. Tom Sackville, presented a Bill to establish a limit for the weekly payments of benefits under the Social Security Acts subject to certain conditions: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Thursday 6 November and to be printed. [Bill 230.]

Organ Donor Cards

4.10 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to enable potential adult organ donors to specify the uses to which their organs may be put.

The House is aware that, since the inception of the National Health Service in 1948, it has been recognised that a doctor may choose to work in the private sector, in the private and National Health Service sector or solely in the National Health Service. Many doctors refuse to treat private patients because, they argue, their principles would be jeopardised if monetary considerations played any part in medical judgments. I admire their principles. In medical matters, more than in any other, there should be no market-place concept of supply and demand.

The principles that have operated for almost 40 years should be extended. Organ transplant donors should have the right to prescribe the use to which their vital organs should be put. If a doctor can say that he will not treat patients in private beds, donors should have the right to say that their kidneys, livers, hearts, eyes and lungs cannot be given to patients occupying private beds.

The Bill's aim is simple. I merely wish the donor card to identify the donor's wishes. Any doctor who leaves the National Health Service to work in one of the hospitals so loved by richer people compromises his medical ethics. He demonstrates that he will go where the money is. Such doctors are moving to a situation in which a compromise of high moral principle is possible. If National Health Service patients are in direct competition with private patients for transplant organs, such doctors might also allow financial considerations to modify clinical ones.

Of course, not everyone will agree with my diagnosis of private doctors. Donors who disagree can specify that their organs go to patients in private beds or to any patients who require organ donations. However, a number of people require that their transplanted organs go solely to National Health Service patients. It is impossible for many people to avoid being exploited during their lifetime, but it is possible, in this limited case, to ensure that they will not be exploited after death.

Should a private patient for whom a transplant has been perfectly matched need the organ of a donor who has stated that a part of his body should go only to a National Health Service patient, the solution is simple. All he needs to do is to become a National Health Service patient. of course, the private doctor would lose money, but he might save a life.

My Bill urges that the reverse side of the donor card should present three choices. At present, as the House will be aware, it reads:

"I request that after my death
(a) my kidneys, eyes, heart, liver, pancreas be used for transplantation."

My Bill will offer three choices of the patients who may be given the transplants: first, patients treated wholly in private beds, secondly, patients treated wholly in National Health Service beds, and thirdly, all patients.

My Bill is simple. It gives a right to the donor to decide whether to donate his organs to patients in private beds, all patients, or patients in National Health Service beds.

Question put and agreed to.

[Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse]

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Roy Mason, Mr. Kevin Barron, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Frank Dobson, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Walter Harrison, Mr. William O'Brien, Mr. Alec Woodall and Mr. A. E. P. Duffy.

Organ Donor Cards

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse accordingly presented a Bill to enable potential adult organ donors to specify the uses to which their organs may be put: And the same was read the First time, and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday next and to be printed. [Bill 228.]

Orders of the Day

Public Order Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

Riot

Lords amendments: No. 1, in page 2, line 9, leave out "life" and insert
"a term not exceeding 10 years".

4.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

As hon. Members will know, 10 years was the maximum sentence recommended for riot by the Law Commission. The Government accepted that recommendation in the White Paper. We did so in the knowledge that the recommendation was in line with current sentencing practice, but last November a sentence of life imprisonment was handed down to a football hooligan for riot. That sentence was taken to appeal. The Government thought it right to preserve the position pending the appeal. Therefore, the maximum sentence of life was laid down in the Bill. The Court of Appeal has stated its views. The Government listened to the views expressed by the Opposition and in the other place. We have always approached this matter with an open mind. We therefore accept the amendment from the other place, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on assuming the office of Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. We worked with him — or against him, if he cares to look at it that way — during the record sittings in Committee on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. Although we had our differences, we came to have considerable regard for him. We welcome him to his present position. We hope that he will maintain in his present position all the views on Home Office legislation that he expressed from below the Gangway. That can only lead to a massive improvement in the Government's legislation.

We are glad that the Government accepted this amendment in the House of Lords, and we support it in this place. We regard it as a possible noxious absurdity that sentence legislation should be effected by a sentence handed down by the courts. It is for Parliament to set sentences and for the courts to administer them, not the other way around.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I join the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in congratulating the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on his ministerial appointment. I, too, am glad that the Government accept that the sentence for the offence of riot should be limited to a maximum of 10 years. This raises an issue of importance and principle — maximum sentences — which has been debated many times in many places. In this small part of the legislation the Government have accepted the principle that the maximum sentence

should be a realistic maximum related to the conduct of the offence. I hope that the Government will recognise the need to make other maximum sentences a realistic reflection of the worst manifestation of the offence envisaged, rather than continue the practice whereby maximum sentences are enacted at an unrealistically high level.

Mr. Warren Hawksley (The Wrekin): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on his promotion. I remember his strictures to be brief when he was a Whip and we dared to speak in Committee.

On Second Reading I commended the sentence of life imprisonment imposed by Judge Michael Argyle on the Chelsea football fan. In Committee I spoke in favour of retaining the sentence of life imprisonment. At that stage the Minister said that he would wait to see what happened on appeal before deciding whether to accept an amendment tabled by the Opposition.

I am concerned with whether the sentence of life imprisonment for riot, which was imposed last year by a judge, should be retained. When that sentence was announced many people were surprised and shocked, but I believe that the public at large thought that it was fair. They believed that it was necessary as a deterrent to ensure that similar acts did not take place. If I remember correctly, even the official Opposition were quiet in their condemnation. Public support for the sentence was almost uniform. It is wrong for the Conservative Government, who believe in law and order, and who have been elected twice on a strong law and order policy, to reduce a sentence which a judge felt was appropriate as recently as last year.

I shall not divide the House on the amendment, but I would support any hon. Member who felt inclined to do so because I believe that this is a sentence which should be available and which the House proposes unwisely to reduce.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) about the reduction from life imprisonment to 10 years as the sentence for riot. I believe that the culpability and participation of some people involved in incidents such as the Handsworth riots, in which sections of the town were burnt down, people died and extensive looting occurred, are such that they merit a sentence longer than 10 years.

On Second Reading I had to declare an interest because I was involved in defending the man who was subsequently described as the "fat man" in the Chelsea riot case. Having read the papers, I fully support the view of the Court of Appeal in that case that the sentence of life imprisonment was longer than was merited on the facts. But there are situations in which the sentence of life imprisonment for the offence of riot is appropriate. I shall not divide the House because of my views, but I lay down a marker: there may come a time in the not too distant future when we shall regret the decision to reduce the sentence to 10 years. To a large extent we are devaluing the sentences imposed on those who commit other offences described in the Bill. There will be a temptation when charges are laid in serious cases for judges to impose lesser sentences rather than consider them as more serious offences. Perhaps in years to come we shall look back at this debate and live to regret our decision.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 11

ADVANCE NOTICE OF PUBLIC PROCESSIONS

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 7, line 14, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

"(4) Notice must be delivered to a police station—

(a) in the police area in which it is proposed the procession will start, or

(b) where it is proposed the procession will start in Scotland and cross into England, in the first police area in England on the proposed route."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 3 to 5.

Mr. Hogg: I thank the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) for their kind words. We all served on the Standing Committee on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, which had 59 sittings.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. Gentleman has a badge to prove it.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. and learned Gentleman says that I have a badge to prove it. I do not think that I was given one, but I know that the right hon. Member for Gorton has one to prove it. After 59 sittings, we had subjected the Bill to careful and detailed scrutiny. It was a pleasure to work with hon. Members, and I look forward to doing so again.

It might be helpful if I summarise what the group of amendments will do. Amendment No. 2 is designed to provide that where a public procession of which notice is required under clause 11 is to pass through more than one police force area, notice need be given only in the area in which it starts. Paragraph *(b)* of the amendment provides for marches that start in Scotland. In such cases notice must be given in the first police force area in England through which the march is intended to go.

Amendment No. 3 is a more technical amendment. It is intended to ensure consistency in phraseology throughout.

Amendment No. 4 establishes a requirement that banning orders made under clause 13 and not made in writing should be recorded in writing as soon as practicable thereafter. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that banning orders, or a record of them, will always be available in writing.

Amendment No. 5 does no more than make explicit what was always implicit.

Mr. Kaufman: We particularly welcome the principle amendment in the group, because we were concerned about the burdens imposed on those organising marches delivering a large number of notices. We therefore welcome the measure and support the Government's acceptance of this group of amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New Clause

MEANING OF "RACIAL HATRED"

Lords amendment. No. 6, before clause 17, insert the following new clause

". In this Part "racial hatred" means hatred against a group of persons in Great Britain defined by reference to colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 7 to 26, 30, 31, 34 and 35.

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid that I shall have to take a little longer to explain what this group of amendments seeks to achieve than I took in considering the previous group.

My hon. Friend the then Minister of State undertook in Committee to consider bringing forward an amendment to extend part III of the Bill to broadcasting, films, videos, sound recordings and other media. That is essentially the purpose of all these new clauses and amendments. It proved difficult to make the framework of part III accommodate these other media and to ensure that consistency was maintained between the offences as they affect the various forms of communication in question. For that reason, it has been necessary to rewrite part III in its entirety. I apologise for that, but it was necessary if we were to achieve the undertakings that we gave.

The result is that these amendments are very different in form to clauses 17 to 24 as they stood when the Bill was last before the House. Despite appearances, what the amendments seek to achieve is relatively simple. They retain the existing provisions of part III, but they make appropriate changes and additions to bring other media within the scope of the Bill.

4.30 pm

We decided that, as part III will include other media, it should be comprehensive. There are existing statutory offences, such as incitement to racial hatred in section 5 of the Theatres Act 1968 and section 27 of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. We thought it more appropriate to bring those offences into part III, which is what we have sought to do in the new clauses.

It might be helpful if I explain briefly each of the new clauses. The first new clause—which will be clause 17 if accepted — defines "racial hatred." Although the wording is slightly different from that which formerly appeared, there is no change in the substantive meaning. In making the amendments, it seemed appropriate that the definition of "racial hatred", which is at the centre of part III, should appear at the commencement of part III rather than be tucked away in some interpretation clause at the end of that part.

The second new clause—which would be clause 18 if accepted—is broadly equivalent to the former clause 19, which dealt with the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or gestures intended or likely to stir up racial hatred. The two changes in the wording will clarify the activities to which the offence will apply.

First, the new clause refers to the use of words or behaviour—and I stress "behaviour". That is to ensure that forms of behaviour are caught that would not necessarily be caught by the phrase "words or gestures", but which in themselves may well be threatening, abusive or insulting and capable of stirring up racial hatred. In so far as any change has been made, it has been to extend the scope of the offence.

The second significant change is that the new clause refers to the display of written material. That will catch, for example, banners and placards. It was always our intention that such activities should be caught, but we felt it right to put the position wholly beyond doubt.

The third new clause, which would be clause 19 if accepted, is equivalent to the former clause 17. The wording is slightly different, but, in effect, we are dealing with the same animal.

The fourth new clause is new to part III, but its substance is not new. Here, of course, I am referring to what will be clause 20 if it is accepted. The clause replaces section 5 of the Theatres Act 1968 and brings it into line with the other provisions of part III. It was originally intended to achieve that by way of an amendment to the Theatres Act 1968 which formerly appeared in section 2(3). However, we decided that it was more logical to incorporate the relevant provisions within the body of part III.

The fifth new clause, which will be clause 21 if accepted, is entirely new. It is intended to deal with the distribution, showing or playing of visual or sound recordings, including videos, films and sound tapes. This clause is framed in parallel terms to that dealing with the publication or distribution of written material. The offences are similar. Under the third new clause—which will be clause 19 if accepted—it is not an offence to write offensive material. The offence consists of its publication or distribution to the public or a section of it. Individuals are free to write what they like. It is only when there may be public order consequences that the criminal law comes into play. Similarly, under the fifth new clause, it is an offence to distribute, show or play to the public or a section of the public a threatening, abusive or insulting recording with the intention or likelihood of stirring up racial hatred. It will not be an offence merely to make an offensive recording.

The sixth new clause — which, if accepted, will be clause 22 — deals with broadcasting and cable programmes. The provisions are adopted from those which appear in schedule 2, amending the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984 which deals with cable programmes only. The new clause brings within the scope of part III all forms of broadcasting and cable service, except transmissions of BBC and Independent Broadcasting Authority programmes.

The seventh new clause—clause 23, if accepted—is broadly equivalent to former clause 18 in making it an offence in certain circumstances to possess racially inflammatory material. Material changes have been made to take account not only of the inclusion of other media in part III but of the specific inclusion within the second new clause of written material such as placards.

I do not need to say very much in detail on the other new clauses. They reproduce those clauses in part III, as we last considered it, which deal with entry, search, forfeiture, procedure, punishment, offences by corporations and the interpretation of part III. There has been some rearrangement and certain changes to take account of other media, but no changes of substance. Amendments Nos. 19 to 26, revising the existing part III, and the amendments to schedules 2 and 3 are consequential.

This has been a fairly swift scamper through a fairly complex part of the Bill. I hope that what I have said makes the position clear to right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I should like to give a broad welcome to the amendments that the Minister has just introduced. We all agree that racism or encouraging racial hatred must be evil. We have had statutes in regard to these matters for the past 10 years, since the Race Relations Act 1976 amended the Public Order Act 1936.

Difficulties at that time and since have been reflected in a reluctance to prosecute, and sometimes there have been failed prosecutions. I very much hope that the net effect of the Bill, including the specific new amendments from the other place which the Minister has described, will result in legislation being more effective.

Hon. Members will be aware that some of the other changes that the Minister did not describe in detail were made in Committee. I refer to those changes as well as to those that the Minister has just described. I hope that the net effect of the changes will result in successful prosecutions where material causes great offence. For example, some nasty items were in circulation during the Fulham by-election. At the time it was judged that a prosecution was not desirable because it would not be effective — or at least, there was a reluctance to prosecute.

More recently, there have been items which again have given many people cause for concern. For example, when visas were introduced at Heathrow airport, one of our daily papers might have been liable for prosecution had the new arrangements been in force. In one newspaper there was also a cartoon, which has been described as the "Arab pigs" cartoon. I hope that that sort of material would now be liable for prosecution under the new arrangements.

I am especially pleased that the Government have accepted many of the Labour party's suggestions. Indeed, I am sure that the Minister will agree that many of the suggestions he has described derive much of their strength from the arguments put forward by the Opposition in Committee. I particularly welcome the fact that the offences will now be arrestable. I welcome the amendment which means that this legislation will not merely be confined to public places and I welcome the fact that the provisions cover videos, tapes, cable and theatres. Although it comes a little later, I also welcome the extension of this part of the Bill to cover football supporters travelling to and from football grounds.

I must mention two difficulties which, on my interpretation, will still remain. The incitement to racial hatred has further consequences than simply that offence. It encourages some of the extreme elements in our society to indulge in racial harassment and attacks. I had hoped that the Government would find some way of making that an offence in the legislation. Alas, that was not to be.

My second concern is that some of the material which would now be liable for prosecution under the Bill will still escape because it is imported. I referred some such material to the Home Office not long ago. The material came from the United States from an organisation called New Order. The Minister of State, in a letter to me, said: "the Attorney General has now looked at these papers and . . . takes the view that the material is extremely offensive and would merit prosecution if publication or distribution within this country could be proved."

I fear that there is still a danger, despite the tightening up in the arrangements, that some such material can come in by post. However, I am not able to make any suggestion to the Government on this matter. Unless such material can easily be identified from the outside of the envelope, I do not think that we can do much about it. I would not suggest that mail coming into this country should be looked at to see whether it contains such items.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I accept my hon. Friend's last point. However, is he aware that I have received such literature in the post, supposedly posted in the United States? I have not been able to check. I sent the details to the Home Secretary, and he replied along the lines indicated by my hon. Friend. Does he agree that some further action is necessary to try to curb this race hate material, which is deeply offensive to so many people in our country?

Mr. Dubs: I understand my hon. Friend's point. Such material is deeply offensive, and I hope that we can find some way of dealing with it. The best way would be to tackle it at source, but that means in other countries.

Some other material which came into this country some years ago — I believe it was printed in Spain — came through an anonymous post box in Dublin. Again, despite all our efforts, it has proved impossible to pin down anybody in this country as being a prime distributor of that type of material. I mention that because if there were more material coming in in that way, it would, to a certain extent, negate the improvements that we are discussing.

Despite my reservations, I welcome the new provisions. We agree that racism is a scourge. It causes fear and humiliation to people who are attacked. I very much hope that this new measure will be effective. Of course, I would not be so optimistic as to say that it will eliminate all the material that it is designed to eliminate. However, I hope that it will significantly lessen the likelihood of material of that sort being produced and published and prevent racist slogans being used. I hope that it will make our society a little healthier than it is at present.

4.45 pm

Mr. Hind: I welcome these amendments, as I am sure most hon. Members will, especially Conservative Members. Some of us who were here for the debate about visas find it ironic that the party which was constantly accused in that debate of being racist should be the party which brings forward a major change in our race relations legislation by codifying our existing legislation in part III of the Bill and extending the legislation to videos, films and sound recordings.

Perhaps this part of the Bill, now a weapon in the hands of the police to help stamp out unpleasant racist attitudes in our community, will be reciprocated by many of those who are stimulating the opposition to the police in our communities, especially those who are encouraging the more divisive elements in our ethnic communities to reject the attitudes of the police. I am thinking particularly of Mr. Bernie Grant who, following the Tottenham riot, deliberately stimulated anti-police feeling. I am also thinking of the attitude of many Labour councils which keep the police out of schools because they are regarded as racist and against our ethnic communities.

I hope that we will see an end to some of the ridiculous directives from some local education authorities, especially the Inner London education authority, where black coffee is now to be treated as coffee without milk and Blackheath

[Mr. Hind]

is to be known only as the heath. Perhaps this policy will encourage the community to recognise that we need a colour-blind policy, under which everybody is treated equally and the divisions and differences between our various communities are not rammed down the throat of the adult population and schoolchildren. Perhaps it will lead to change. I commend these thoughts to the House and wholeheartedly support this progressive piece of legislation.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I should like to join other hon. Members by broadly welcoming these new clauses. It is very rare that we can look at a piece of legislation and say that it simplifies the law. In this case we can see provisions which simplify the law by providing a comprehensive code, all of which is to be found in one short statute and in one place, to deal with the incitement of racial hatred.

The incitement of racial hatred is hateful and insidious. We all condemn direct personal violence: such violence is easily perceived, whereas the incitement of racial hatred is difficult to perceive. Its particular insidiousness is the way in which an emotive appeal can be achieved, especially among young people, many of whom may not fully understand the form, force or purpose of the incitement. I hope that those who produce publications and videos and who demonstrate in an attempt to stir up racial hatred will recognise that this is a powerful new piece of legislation in our armoury, which all of us wish to use to create an anti-racist and even-handed society.

I thought that the speech of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) was a little unhelpful. He failed to realise that the provisions in these new clauses are indeed even-handed. They apply equally to those who are white and may wish to stir up racial hatred against those who are black, as to those who come from a non-white ethnic group and who wish to stir up racial hatred against white people. It seems right and proper when we legislate that such even-handedness should be apparent from the beginning in these statutory provisions.

The use of the word "behaviour" in Lords amendment No. 7 is infinitely preferable to "gestures" which appeared formerly. I am still a little worried about how far these provisions will cover the use of certain emblems which may be used for racial purposes. One always tends to cite the swastika as an example, but other emblems with racist intent are used by various groups. I hope that the Minister will reassure us that the provisions in the new clauses will be sufficient to deal with at least those emblems which are readily identifiable as racist.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): While I also welcome the amendments as a major step forward in protecting minorities from discrimination, I wonder whether there is an anomaly in one of the amendments which may have been overlooked, or whether I am misinterpreting what I am reading.

Lords amendment No. 7(2) states:

"An offence under this section may be committed in a public or a private place, except that no offence is committed where the words or behaviour are used, or the written material is displayed, by a person inside a dwelling and are not heard or seen except by other persons in that or another dwelling."

In clause 8 "dwelling" means

"any structure or part of a structure occupied as a person's home or as other living accommodation (whether the occupation is separate or shared with others)."

Does that mean that material which is threatening, abusive or insulting may be displayed in a hotel foyer or in a lodging house? Those quotations would appear to mean that they are dwellings and so exceptions to the amendment.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I, too, support these amendments. In doing so, it is important that the whole House believes that this is not merely cosmetic legislation. It would be a tragedy if the Government were securing these laws merely to give themselves a cloak of respectability without any determination that they should be used effectively against all those who seek to encourage or further racial hatred, regardless of their colour.

It is also important that the Government, in particular the Home Office, should be at pains to ensure that the conditions in which racial hatred flourishes are not furthered by Ministers. I have a letter from Anne Owers, general secretary of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, which states:

"On 21 October, there was an arson attempt at JCWI's office. Two people broke in with the sole aim of starting a fire. Fortunately, the Fire Service was alerted in time to prevent serious damage.

The arson attempt followed racist letters threatening violence to JCWI and members of our staff. It is clearly a result of JCWI's uncompromising public stand against racist immigration and nationality laws, and in particular our recent opposition to visas for people from the Indian subcontinent and West Africa. We believe that the government's decision to impose visas only on people from those countries, and the inflammatory media coverage over the last few weeks, have encouraged and legitimised racist attitudes. Attacks on black people and those who support them are an inevitable result.

JCWI was lucky. If the fire had not been noticed in time, we would have lost more than our building. We would have lost our unique records, detailing British immigration and nationality law, practice and policy over the last nineteen years. There could have been serious injury to staff members. We have to improve the security of our building."

Earlier, I spoke about the responsibility of the Government, particularly Home Office Ministers, to exercise responsibility and restraint in discussing matters relating to race. Therefore, I was deeply disturbed by the Home Secretary's speech on Friday night, which was widely reported. The *Daily Express*'s version was:

"Home Secretary Douglas Hurd yesterday brought immigration to the forefront of the next General Election with a blistering attack on Labour's race policy.

He said their policies were wrong and stupid. And he accused leader Neil Kinnock and Shadow Home Secretary Gerald Kaufman of speaking with 'forked tongues'.

Then he lashed Left-wing councils by accusing them of racial witchhunts that divide communities . . .

He said there was a limit to the number of newcomers that any society can absorb without coming under strain.

'We have tightened the rules preventing the admission of those who are likely to become a burden on public funds. We shall further ensure that our immigration controls remain in good repair.

There is wide support for our system of immigration control, which is firm and fair. It would be a great boon if it could be accepted by all political parties.

The rules apply to all regardless of race, they do not seek to block people already settled here from being joined by their spouse and children.'

Labour's pledges to scrap the two Acts would result in a large increase in the numbers of people eligible to settle in Britain, he said."

In his remarks, the Home Secretary sought to contrast the statements of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), who rightly said that the Labour party was pledged to repeal the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981, with alleged statements

of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that the net result of scrapping that legislation would be an increase of only 1,000 people into the United Kingdom. Such remarks, coming within days of the controversial debate on the wisdom of the Government's decision to introduce visas, were inflammatory. The Home Secretary's speech was designed to frighten considerable sections of the British public and to confuse and divide our community. It was wholly unhelpful to the promotion of good race and community relations.

Mr. Hind: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hesitate to interrupt, but we are debating part III of the Public Order Bill, not a speech given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary last week. With due respect, we are going a little wide of the subject.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair follows the debate carefully. The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) is relating his remarks to Lords amendment No. 6.

Mr. Madden: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was following the spirit of the earlier remarks of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). My conclusions are certainly different from his, but my remarks accurately mirror his remarks.

Our debates on race are of fundamental importance and no Labour Member in any way underestimates their importance or that of the promotion of good race and community relations. We have considerable interest in ensuring that good race and community relations are promoted, regardless of colour, race and sex. I appeal to Home Office Ministers and the Conservative party to ensure that the debate is conducted on the basis of fact and I urge the Home Secretary to show much more caution and responsibility in any further utterances which he may wish to make on the subject.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box and I trust that he will continue to abominate secondary legislation.

Although I welcome the new clause, I regret that it does not deal with incitement to religious hatred. I have studied the case of Manla *v.* Dowell Lee which was before the House of Lords. The basic argument was that religious hatred, in certain circumstances, could be construed to be racial hatred. I regret that the opportunity to deal with the problem of religious hatred has been missed.

5 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to respond to the four points that have been raised. The speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) was typical of him and it did no credit to the cause that he is seeking to promote. Anybody who knows my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is perfectly aware that no Minister has done more to promote good race relations. I am sure that when the hon. Member for Bradford, West reflects on his remarks today he will regret them.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) questioned whether emblems would be covered by the Bill. I refer him to the definition clause, where he will see that written material covers emblems. I trust that that reassures him.

The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) raised a complicated matter. If the hon. Gentleman studies the definition clause—it is a far-ranging clause—he will see that, in certain circumstances, a hotel would be classified as a dwelling. The residential parts—that is, the bedrooms—would be a dwelling but the common parts would not. Probably—I say probably because in the end this is a matter for the courts—the same approach would be taken to boarding houses. The bedrooms in a hotel and in a boarding house would be treated as a dwelling for the purpose of the Bill, but common parts of either building would not be treated as such. I trust that that reassures the hon. Gentleman.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) for his kind observations. I shall always treat with suspicion the process of secondary legislation, but I must say—as a candid man—that I suspect I shall use it on occasion or at least advocate to the House that we use it.

Religious hatred is a difficult and important matter. The Government have decided not to include religious hatred in Part III of the Bill because we came to the conclusion that attempts at control would be unenforceable. It would open up too many concepts and too many circumstances in which the law would be required to intervene. If such a provision had been contained in the Bill, we would have created for ourselves unenforceable legislation. I hope what we have done is to restrict our efforts to those areas where we can hope, reasonably, to enforce the law. In that event I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New Clause

CONTAMINATION OF OR INTERFERENCE WITH GOODS WITH INTENTION OF CAUSING PUBLIC ALARM OR ANXIETY, ETC

Lords amendment: No. 27, before clause 33, insert the following new clause—

" .—(1) It is an offence for a person, with the intention—

(a) of causing public alarm or anxiety, or

(b) of causing injury to members of the public consuming or using the goods, or

(c) of causing economic loss to any person by reason of the goods being shunned by members of the public, or

(d) of causing economic loss to any person by reason of steps taken to avoid any such alarm or anxiety, injury or loss,

to contaminate or interfere with goods, or make it appear that goods have been contaminated or interfered with, or to place goods which have been contaminated or interfered with, or which appear to have been contaminated or interfered with, in a place where goods of that description are consumed, used, sold or otherwise supplied.

(2) It is also an offence for a person, with any such intention as is mentioned in paragraph *(a)*, *(c)* or *(d)* of subsection (1), to threaten that he or another will do, or to claim that he or another has done, any of the acts mentioned in that subsection.

(3) It is an offence for a person to be in possession of any of the following articles with a view to the commission of an offence under subsection (1)—

(a) materials to be used for contaminating or interfering with goods or making it appear that goods have been contaminated or interfered with, or

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

(b) goods which have been contaminated or interfered with, or which appear to have been contaminated or interfered with.

(4) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years or a fine or both, or

(b) on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.

(5) In this section "goods" includes substances whether natural or manufactured and whether or not incorporated in or mixed with other goods.

(6) The reference in subsection (2) to a person claiming that certain acts have been committed does not include a person who in good faith reports or warns that such acts have been, or appear to have been, committed."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is interesting because it introduces a new criminal offence to strengthen the law to deal with the contamination of consumer goods and associated threats and claims. The House will no doubt be aware that in recent years there have been a number of incidents involving the contamination of food products and other consumer goods. It is notable that many such acts have been carried out by members of extremist organisations, who have attempted to force companies to change their policies, for example, in relation to research on animals. In other cases the motive has been simple extortion.

The perpetrators seek to cast doubts on the wholesomeness of large quantities of a company's products. For obvious reasons it is not possible for a company to check each and every one of its products, and therefore it may have no alternative but to empty its shelves and destroy large stocks. This can obviously cause large-scale economic losses.

The law already contains a number of provisions which apply to the circumstances which we have witnessed in recent years, but none of them were designed to deal primarily with the mischief that I have mentioned. I hope that the House will agree to the amendment, which I commend to it.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

POWER TO DIRECT TRESPASSERS TO LEAVE LAND

Lords amendment: No. 28, before clause 33, insert the following new clause—

". —(1) If the senior police officer reasonably believes that two or more persons have entered land as trespassers and are present there with the common purpose of residing there for any period, that reasonable steps have been taken by or on behalf of the occupier to ask them to leave and —

(a) that any of those persons has caused damage to property on the land or used threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards the occupier, a member of his family or an employee or agent of his, or

(b) that those persons have between them brought twelve or more vehicles on to the land,

he may direct those persons, or any of them, to leave the land.

(2) If a person knowing that such a direction has been given which applies to him—

(a) fails to leave the land as soon as reasonably practicable, or

(b) having left again enters the land as a trespasser within the period of three months beginning with the day on which the direction was given,

he commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months of a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale, or both.

(3) A constable in uniform who reasonably suspects that a person is committing an offence under this section may arrest him without warrant.

(4) In proceedings for an offence under this section it is a defence for the accused to show—

(a) that his original entry on the land was not as a trespasser, or

(b) that he had a reasonable excuse for failing to leave the land as soon as reasonably practicable or, as the case may be, for again entering the land as a trespasser.

(5) In this section—

"land" does not include

(a) buildings other than—

(i) agricultural buildings within the meaning of section 26(4) of the General Rate Act 1967, or

(ii) scheduled monuments within the meaning of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, or

(b) land forming part of a highway;

"occupier" means the person entitled to possession of the land by virtue of an estate or interest held by him;

"property" means property within the meaning of section 10(1) of the Criminal Damage Act 1971;

"senior police officer" means the most senior in rank of the police officers present at the scene;

"trespasser", in relation to land, means a person who is a trespasser as against the occupier of the land;

"vehicle" includes a caravan as defined in section 29(1) of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960; and a person may be regarded for the purposes of this section as having the purpose of residing in a place notwithstanding that he has a home elsewhere."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Kaufman: I disagree with the proposed Lords amendment, and I beg to move amendment (a) thereto, in line 2, leave out 'the senior police officer' and insert 'a police officer of the rank of inspector or above'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take also the following amendments to the proposed Lords amendment:

(a), in line 14, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'four'.

(b), in line 20, leave out from 'practicable' to end of line 23.

(c), leave out lines 54 and 55.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I thank the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). Grouped with this amendment are a series of amendments that have been tabled by the Opposition. It seems desirable that I should argue the case for the new clause, and the right hon. Gentleman will then have the opportunity to speak to his amendments in the context of what has been proposed. With the leave of the House, I shall respond to the right hon. Gentleman's arguments at the end of the debate.

The House will recall that before the recess a great deal of concern was expressed about the mass invasion of land by groups such as the hippie convoy. I do not believe that I am going too far if I suggest that the House was united in its sympathy for people like Mr. Attwell and felt a sense of outrage at the degradations that were caused to him.

The House will recall that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made it clear, in answer to a private notice

question, that the Government were considering strengthening the law to deal with mass aggravated trespass. The result of those considerations is the new clause now before the House, which was moved in another place by my noble Friend the Earl of Caithness. The new clause does not criminalise simple trespass, but creates a new police power to direct trespassers to leave the land under strictly limited circumstances. Those circumstances are set out in detail in subsection (1).

Basic preconditions must apply before the new power can be used, and senior police officers must reasonably believe that two or more persons satisfy certain criteria. They must ascertain that persons have entered the land as trespassers or are present there for the common purpose of residing on the land for any period and

"that reasonable steps have been taken by or on behalf of the occupier to ask them to leave"

These criteria must be satisfied.

The first precondition is to ensure that the power is not available where a landowner has given permission for those persons to camp on his land but has subsequently withdrawn that permission. In those circumstances persons entering the land have not done so as trespassers.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): My chief concern, in common with other hon. Members, is the protection and welfare of our ancient monuments and our antiquity. I wonder whether my hon. Friend has considered what would happen if a person paid the entrance fee to visit Stonehenge, thereby becoming in a sense an invitee or licensee, but then created difficulties. Is that person excluded from the provisions before us?

Mr. Hogg: There are two answers. We have extended the meaning of "land" to include historic monuments within the meaning of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. This was in response to arguments by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu in another place. However, that does not answer my hon. Friend's question. He asked whether the power comes into existence when people enter lawfully, not as trespassers. The answer is no. The power does not come into existence when people enter as lawful licensees or otherwise with authority. The power to order someone to leave applies only when people enter as trespassers.

If a person, having entered lawfully, becomes a trespasser in the sense that consent is withdrawn, the landowner has a right to go to the civil court for ordinary civil relief.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does that mean that a farmer is not protected if the trespassers go on to his land and encamp upon a farm track, not outwith that farm track, and the farm track is designated as a public footpath on which they have a right to go for a walk, for example? That seems to be a regrettable lacuna.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. and learned Member asks a particular and interesting question. I shall reply off the cuff, but if I am wrong I shall write to him. — *[Interruption.]* I always have to contemplate being in error, but if the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) contemplated that possibility, often he would be awake half the night.

It is typical of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) to pick up a difficult matter such as this. It is no wonder that he makes a lot of money at the Bar. He asks what happens if we have to deal with a farm on which there is a public right of way. My immediate response is that the farmer remains the occupier of that bit of land, although it is a public right of way. Provided that the people stay on the footpath they might be all right, but if they stray off one inch they will become trespassers and the power will be triggered.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Not necessarily.

Mr. Hogg: Of course not necessarily, because it is a matter for the courts in each case. I think that provided people stay full square on the public way, they might not be trespassers. It also depends upon the motive. If the motive is to do something for which the public footpath was not created, they might be trespassers, because they propose to do something not contemplated by the existence of the footpath. Footpaths are for walking along. My advice — a wonderful phrase to use on such occasions — is that a public footpath is a highway and that camping upon it is an obstruction, which is an offence, but it is not covered by this power.

Mr. Hind: I should like to assist my hon. Friend. Subsection (5) of the proposed new clause contains a definition of land. It states:

"'land' does not include . . . land forming part of a highway."

If a footpath is a right of way, is it part of the highway within that definition? Does my hon. Friend believe that farm tracks or footpaths are not part of the highway, so that the power will exist in the circumstances that we are discussing? Surely a public right of way is part of the highway and therefore the power cannot exist.

5.15 pm

Mr. Hogg: I shall not go much further. "Land" is defined in subsection (5) of the proposed new clause, and it does not include land which forms part of a highway. I understand that a public footpath is a highway. If that is right, camping on it, although perhaps an obstruction, will not trigger the powers proposed in the Bill.

Mr. Alex Carlile: That is a major lacuna.

Mr. Hogg: I doubt that. Anyone who knows about the countryside — as I do, and the hon. and learned Gentleman does not — knows that bringing a large number of caravans on to a footpath and squatting there without trespassing elsewhere is a preposterous idea.

"Land" is defined so as to exclude buildings other than agricultural buildings or scheduled monuments. It also excludes highways and highway verges. All other land, including common land, is caught. The requirement that the trespassers must have

"the common purpose of residing"

excludes ramblers, bird watchers and other similar users of the countryside from the scope of the power.

The phrase

"residing there for any period"

was taken from the Caravan Sites Act 1968. Subsection (5) of the new clause provides that

"a person may be regarded for the purposes of this section as having the purpose of residing in a place nothwithstanding that he has a home elsewhere."

The third test, that reasonable steps should have been taken by the occupier to request the trespassers to leave, provides an opportunity for trespassers to leave without the police becoming involved. If a large number of trespassers are present, it is not necessary for the occupier

[Mr. Hogg]

to ask each person individually to leave. A general request to leave through, for example, a loud hailer used either by the occupier or someone acting on his behalf will suffice.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Subsection (2)*(a)* of the proposed new clause contains the words "reasonably practicable". What is the definition of those words? Will they not create a lawyers' paradise? To a non-lawyer, that is an ill-defined phrase.

Mr. Hogg: There is no definition of the words "reasonably practicable". That will have to be determined by the courts in the context of the facts. It is not possible for the House, or anyone else away from an incident, to define in anything but the most general terms what "reasonably practicable" means.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The opening words of the new clause are:

"If the senior police officer reasonably believes that two or more persons have entered land as trespassers".

That is different from assuming that the clause will operate only when people are trespassers. I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), because the question whether a person has been a trespasser will be determined only in the light of proceedings and whether the court believes that the senior police officer reasonably believed that the person was a trespasser.

I happen to believe — I hope that my hon. Friend agrees — that this is the only practicable way of dealing with the problem. There are many circumstances in which people try to use the law as a means of avoiding an ordinary, common-sense situation. For practical purposes, there should have been a remedy for what happened in Staffordshire, near Salisbury and elsewhere. Does my hon. Friend agree that it depends on what the police officer, in the first place, reasonably believes to be the case?

Mr. Hogg: Yes. My hon. Friend is correct. I am sorry if I gave a contrary impression. The test is satisfied when the senior police officer "reasonably believes".

We now come to the three criteria that I have already mentioned. It is not necessary to prove as a fact that each one of the three criteria is satisfied. It is sufficient that he "reasonably believes". I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support.

If the senior police officer "reasonably believes" that the three conditions that I have mentioned have been satisfied, he then has reasonably to believe that one of a further three tests has been met before he can exercise his power to direct trespassers to leave.

Mr. Sayeed: As most landowners are not lawyers, a little guidance would be helpful as to what the word "reasonable" means in the context of "reasonable steps". Will my hon. Friend confirm that using a loud hailer to ask people to leave and sticking up notices which are clearly visible around the land would be reasonable action, so that landowners who are not lawyers will understand the meaning of the word "reasonable"?

Mr. Hogg: All that I can say about the meaning of the word "reasonable" is that the test which the court will apply is objective.

Mr. Kaufman: It is subjective.

Mr. Hogg: I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman. It is objective, and it is the test which the court would apply when judging action in the context of the circumstances which existed. It may well be that the use of a loud hailer is reasonable. The affixing of notices, as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) might be reasonable. I cannot define these things, and even if I did it would not be binding. In the end the courts will determine what is reasonable. They have to do that throughout a whole range of law.

Mr. Kaufman: If the Minister regards the interventions of his hon. Friends as helpful, he should be so lucky as to what helpful means.

Mr. Cash: Be nice.

Mr. Kaufman: I have been nice. I have done my bit for the afternoon and cannot go on being nice for the whole day.

The Minister said that it is an objective test. I advise him to get the civil servants in the Box to send for a dictionary, even a small one, because the amendment begins:

"If the senior police officer reasonably believes".

That relates to something that is going on in the head of the senior police officer and must be subjective. There is no objectivity about an individual's belief.

Mr. Hogg: So far as that observation goes, it is true. The trouble is that it does not go far enough, because in determining whether the police officer's state of mind was reasonable or unreasonable the court has regard to objective, not subjective, criteria. Courts always approach problems of this sort in such a way.

Mr. Alex Carlile *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hogg: I am glad that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) agrees with me. I am afraid that on this matter I must tell the right hon. Member for Gorton that a clever point was badly made. It was a clever point, but it happened to be the wrong one. That was a misfortune from the right hon. Gentleman's point of view, but not from mine.

Only one of the tests must be satisfied; that any of those present has caused damage to property on the land, or that any of the trespassers has used threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards the occupier, a member of his family or an employee or agent of the occupier, or that between them the trespassers have brought 12 or more vehicles on to the land. It is only at that point, if those subsequent conditions, or any one of them, are satisfied, that the power arises for the police officer to require the trespassers to leave. If the trespassers obey a police direction to leave, no offence is committed. However, the offence is not the trespass, but the refusal to obey a direction to leave.

Subsection (2)*(a)* provides the back-up offence. Anyone who, knowing a direction has been given which applies to him, disobeys that direction, and fails to leave as soon as is reasonably practicable, will commit an offence. In order to deal with the situation where trespassers obey a direction to leave but re-enter the land, subsection (2)*(b)* provides that anyone who re-enters the land as a trespasser within three months is also guilty of an offence. Both offences are triable in the magistrates courts and carry a maximum penalty of three months' imprisonment and/or a fine of £1,000.

Subsection (3) provides that a constable in uniform may arrest without warrant anyone he reasonably suspects is committing an offence under subsection (2).

Subsection (4) provides two defences for anyone accused of an offence under subsection (2). If he can show that when he first entered the land he was not in fact a trespasser, or that he had a reasonable excuse not to leave the land as soon as reasonably practicable, or to re-enter it as a trespasser, he will be not guilty of the offence.

Subsection (5) provides definitions of certain words used in the clause. In particular, "land", as I have said, is defined so as to exclude buildings other than agricultural buildings or buildings which are scheduled monuments, and highways and highway verges. "Occupier" is defined in such a way as to protect the owner or, in appropriate circumstances, the tenant. "Property" is defined by reference to the existing statutory definition in section 10(1) of the Criminal Damage Act 1971.

The new clause will provide the police with the necessary powers to deal with aggravated trespass by groups such as the convoy without having adverse effects on ramblers and other such users of the countryside. The new power is, as the events of the summer have shown, reasonable and necessary. But we have also been extremely careful to ensure that it bites only on the particular mischief which caused so much anxiety this summer. I hope that the new clause is carefully balanced, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Kaufman: I am not in the least surprised that the Home Secretary has suddenly found urgent business in Europe and that the former Minister of State—the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw)—has got himself moved to another Department, because neither of them could have had the bare-faced cheek to sit on the Government Front Bench and support the new clause after their behaviour in Committee. The reason why the Under-Secretary of State is here in lonely isolation moving the amendment is that he is the only member of the Home Office team with completely clean hands on this matter.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): My hon. Friend is a charming fellow.

Mr. Kaufman: He is charming, but that is a different matter.

Manifestations or phenomena such as the hippie convoy are deeply unpopular with the people, and where they cause damage or upset to farmers or landowners they are to be reprehended. At the same time, it is important that we do not use the weight of the criminal law to bear unfairly on people because they have unconventional life styles, and for no other reason. In a democracy, people have the right, without involvement with the criminal law, to pursue life styles that most of us would not wish to pursue. The Government's reaction to those events has not been in proportion to the harm and the aggravation caused. At the same time, I am sympathetic to people such as the farmer, Mr. Attwell, who have found themselves at a grave disadvantage and in considerable trouble as a result of the arrival on their land of groups of people whom they do not wish to have there.

5.30 pm

If we wish to deal with such activities and protect private persons from having their property invaded or damaged and their livelihood affected, is that the right way of doing it? Is it right to create a new criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment? That was not the view of the Home Secretary when he responded to an amendment moved by the the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) and supported by others of his hon. Friends in Committee.

When the hon. Gentleman moved that amendment the Home Secretary said:

"the Association of Chief Police Officers would not welcome an extension of the clause 14 powers to private land. ACPO has told us that it did not wish trespassers to be dealt with in public order legislation."

He went on:

"The police do not wish to be, as it were, at the beck and call of landowners to evict trespassers. The police fear that the measure might cause the complicated concept of criminal trespass to be brought into the law of the land."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 11 March 1986; c. 731.]

That was why the Home Secretary opposed the kind of change in the law which he is now responsible for introducing.

The Home Secretary went on to point out that there were other powers and that those powers should be used. He talked too about the power to enter private land because of breaches of the peace and the statutory power of entry to arrest for criminal damage. Those views were not changed when the Bill was dealt with on the Floor of the House on Report.

The hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw), then the Minister of State in charge of the Bill, must be quoted at length because his words are important. He said:

"the views of the Association of Chief Police Officers are such that it is clear that it it not persuaded of the need for an extension of the new powers under clause 14 in the way that my hon. and learned Friend proposes".

That is the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), who is now a junior Minister. The Minister of State went on:

"The police remain of the view that their existing powers to deal with criminal damage and breach of the peace, together with the offences in clauses 1 to 5, should be sufficient to cope with any real mischief that is likely to arise.

"I think that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire underestimates the powers that will be available to the police"

The Minister then explained why. He said:

"Under the existing law, under the new offences and wider powers that are proposed in the Bill, and under the PACE powers, the police have power to enter private land and make arrests if there is a breach of the peace. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, they have powers to arrest anyone who has committed an offence if service of a summons is impracticable because of difficulties in establishing name and address. The Act give the police powers to enter land to prevent serious damage to property. Under the Bill,"—

the Public Order Bill—

"all the public order offences which the House has been considering tonight will apply to both public and private land. We have deliberately extended the scope of clauses 4 and 5 to private land to catch the sort of behaviour in which peace convoys and other such groups indulge."

Nothing could have been clearer.

Mr. Cash: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No. I am quoting from the hon. Member for Pudsey. The hon. Gentleman must get hold of his hon. Friend and intervene on him, not me.

The Minister went on:

"Once the Bill is in force, anyone on private land who threatens violence or who behaves in a disorderly manner, or who is likely to cause alarm, harassment or distress, will commit an offence under sections 4 or 5, as they will become.

[Mr. Kaufman]

"It follows that with this wide range of powers — the police have told us that this will follow"—

Mr. Cash *rose*—

Mr. Kaufman: No, the hon. Gentleman must get hold of the hon. Member for Pudsey, not me. I am simply quoting him.

The Minister went on:

"the police have told us that this will follow"—

he is quoting the police in support of his very convincing arguments—

"— the police should be able to deal with the real mischief, which lies in criminal damage, threatening behaviour and intimidation by those who happen to be trespassers."

The Minister went on:

"involving the police in a greater extension of services to private landlords might well cause them"—

the police—

"substantial difficulty."

He went on:

"the root of the problem facing landowners whose land is invaded by the peace convoy is the slow enforcement process of the civil law."

We shall come to that in a moment.

The Minister went on:

"we should not rush into further legislation until the new police powers to which I have referred have been tried and tested. The police believe that the totality of powers available to them will be sufficient."

That is the view of the police.

"We are not in the business of heaping extra powers on the police, for their own sake."

He said:

"a major change to the law on trespass is not something which we are presently minded to contemplate." — [*Official Report*, 30 April 1986; vol. 96, c. 1053-54.]

The Government have gone back on every one of those words, after firm statements by the Home Secretary and the Minister of State.

But then we got the hippie convoy and, most unfortunately, there are television sets at No. 10 Downing street, and the Prime Minister has an incorrigible tendency to watch television and then to press her bell and send for somebody. She keeps on doing it. She did it when she saw some football hooliganism and then we had last year's utterly pointless legislation which did nothing to stop the new outbreaks of football hooliganism.

The Prime Minister had another brainstorm about advertising on the BBC and failed again. Once again, it was the Prime Minister doing her "off with their heads, somebody must be summonsed" act. We had a Downing street committee and all this turmoil and action, despite the previous words.

While the matter was being worked out, while the poor old civil servants at the Home Office, who had most sensibly advised the Home Secretary, and whose advice had been accepted, were trying to work out something that would make some kind of sense, Ministers were treading very carefully indeed. Back Benchers were too. The hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire, now the Under-Secretary of State, was cautious when supporting the amendments which were debated in Committee. He insisted that, to trigger the kind of amendments that he was advocating, the police must be able to establish a real risk of serious public disorder, serious damage to property, or serious disruption to the life of the community. There is nothing of that in the new clause. The new clause is triggered by a great deal less than that.

Lord Denning supported an amendment moved in the other place in the summer but he made it clear that he only wanted an amendment which would deal with people who intend to deprive an owner of his land — his use and occupation of the land. This amendment is far wider than that and does not meet Lord Denning's criteria.

Lord Glenarthur, another Minister who has now been removed from the Home Office in order that he should not have his words quoted against him, was extremely cautious when amendments were being debated in the other place on 16 July. He said:

"there is already a civil law and indeed a speedy procedure for the recovery of the possession of land."

The hon. Member for Stafford had better think about that. Those are the words of one of his noble Friends, now removed to what the Prime Minister calls the far north — Scotland.

While talking about a possible change in the law, Lord Glenarthur said:

"The circumstances we envisage which would trigger the police power would be similar to elements in my noble friend's amendments; entry as a trespasser, with a refusal to leave on request, coupled with a risk of causing serious damage to property and harassment or intimidation of the lawful occupier."

The new clause goes much further than that.

"The lines which I have described are those upon which we are working at present; namely, a police power to evict trespassers in certain limited circumstances where they intend to reside on the land, refuse to leave, and threaten to cause serious damage to property and harassment or intimidation of the lawful occupier."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 July 1986; Vol. 478, c. 983-5.]

That threat to cause serious damage or harassment or intimidation is not in the new clause. It goes much wider than Lord Glenarthur said it would when he said that these matters would be considered. The new junior Minister, the Earl of Caithness, moved the clause and in doing so he made it clear that there was highly effective criminal law to deal with the mischief that his clause was supposed to deal with. He said:

where trespassers cause damage on entering land they may be committing an offence under the Criminal Damage Act 1971."

Addressing one of his noble Friends he said:

"she will appreciate that it is an offence under Section 36 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 to take a vehicle without authority onto any land other than a highway," — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 6 October 1986; Vol. 480, c. 102-4.]

It is a matter of contention between hon. Members. The noble Lord was making it clear that the scope of any such new offence should be extremely limited. But it is not limited, because the Home Secretary said that the new clause was unnecessary and he rejected the proposition when something along these lines was proposed. Even when the new clause was being thought about, a Minister speaking on the Bill in the other place said that it would have a far more limited and stringent scope than the scope of this wide new clause.

The new clause is unnecessary and potentially dangerous. Legal expert after legal expert has said that the civil law is available and can operate quickly. It can operate within five days of service of proceedings and, as we have seen, that proceeding can be abridged to as little as one day. It need not be expensive and indeed, farmer Attwell, a member of the public who quite rightly attracted sympathy because of his predicament, obtained his remedy under order 113 of the Supreme Court rules. So did 25 other landowners in the Stonehenge area.

The Government were so confident about the basic efficacy of order 113 of the Supreme Court rules that the Lord Chancellor — a member of the Government not entirely unknown to the Under-Secretary of State — issued a consultation paper on order 113 with the aim of making the civil law more efficient, speedy and effective. The noble Lord issued a press notice on 3 October, only a month ago, in which he said:

"Changes in the civil law procedure for the recovery of land from trespassers have been canvassed in a consultation paper issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department. Their object is to ensure that such cases are heard promptly. At present, a final order for possession may be made five days after the application is served on the defendants or sooner in urgent cases. It is proposed that the five-day period should be shortened to three days, with the power to shorten the period remaining. It is also intended to make it easier to serve the application on defendants whose names need not be known and who are occupying land rather than buildings. Any changes to the rules of court would probably come into force in the new year."

That is only a few weeks away. As I have said, that consultation paper was issued on 3 October and the Earl of Caithness moved this clause in another place three days later and the consultation period ended only last Friday. The Government have made a farce of the Lord Chancellor's whole exercise of trying to improve order 113, which has been shown in the courts to be a highly effective remedy for this mischief.

Mr. Sayeed: I should like to ask the right hon. Gentleman what he would have done or how the Lord Chancellor's guidance notes would have helped in the following situation. A bunch of tinkers parked a large number of caravans in a field at the bottom of the garden of one of my constituents. The people were evicted by the landowner and that cost him about £4,500. He is not a rich man. The tinkers have returned and the landowner cannot afford to evict them again.

5.45 pm

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman's constituent had better take this up with the Home Secretary, who said that the remedy available was satisfactory. He should also take it up with the Minister of State and with Lord Glenarthur who also said that the remedy was satisfactory. He could also take it up with the Lord Chancellor who believes that the remedy is inherently satisfactory but could be tightened up a bit. That is why he issued his consultation paper about order 113. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me I shall come to the reason why the course of action that he and the Government are proposing—that the police will enforce the civil law—is unsatisfactory and why a potential injustice to the hon. Gentleman's constituent might be counterbalanced by a severe injustice to others by criminalising this.

The Government have jumped their own gun. The new clause is firmly opposed by a number of groups of people whom the Under-Secretary of State might describe as objective, such as the Law Society. One of the reasons why the new clause is bad is that it imposes an unfair burden on the police officer who will have to administer its provisions. He might be quite a junior officer. That is why we have tabled an amendment about upgrading the police officer who will be responsible for giving the direction.

The police officer on the spot will not be an expert on the civil law or the law of trespass and is not required to be. Nevertheless, he will have to form a belief and make a judgment because his reasonable belief triggers off the action. He will have to form a belief about the intentions of a group of people and about questions of fact. He may have to take sides in a dispute about rights to use land, because, under the law, trespass is not an obvious proceeding. There can be arguments about whether an act is trespass and there are civil law provisions to adjudicate on that.

Disputes over rights to occupy or use land may lead to accusations of trespass. That concept has to be applied not in the first instance by the court which becomes involved only after the arrest, but by a police officer on the spot who has not had the opportunity fully to investigate, as provided for in civil courts by the hearing of evidence under oath, cross-examination and the opportunity to produce documents. The police officer on the spot making a snap judgment has to be a civil court on his own, making judgments on the rights and wrongs of a dispute about land. That is exceptionally unfair to the police, but then, the Government's last two major Acts were exceptionally unfair to the police.

The police officer on the spot may quite possibly be a junior person and may have to act on an impromptu interpretation of the civil law. That is not his role. One analysis is that that nebulous concept of reasonable belief may have to be based on judgments of up to 34 different criteria.

I shall give some examples of what I mean. The police officer will have to make a judgment on
"entering the land as a trespasser",
and whether a person is a trespasser may be a matter of civil dispute. The police officer will have to make a judgment on the phrase "for any period". This could be a day, a week or a month. Without any definition, neither the police officer nor the occupier is able to know how long the occupier must intend to reside before a direction is given. Another example is "reasonable steps". In this context, "reasonable" is especially unsatisfactory. What other "reasonable steps" can there be to ask someone to leave other than asking him to leave?

A further example is "damage to property". There could be difficulties in deciding whether any damage discovered on the land had been caused by those upon it or by others prior to the occupation. These are all important issues and we are giving a police officer, who has to make these judgments, the right to trigger an arrest that could put someone in prison. A person could be sent to prison if he failed to leave land where he has not caused damage or behaved offensively. That could happen if the officer believed that the person, with others, has taken such action.

There is the question of how the direction is to be given, and the new clause, and therefore the Act, will not specify that. If the direction is to be given verbally, it may not come to the attention of the persons who are involved and there may be dispute about whether anyone knew of the direction. This is despite the fact that those concerned could be imprisoned for ignoring a direction which they did not know about.

Who is a trespasser? These are complex matters, as anyone who practises in the civil courts will know. Civil trespass does not require the knowledge by a trespasser that he or she is trespassing. If a person genuinely believes that he or she has a right to be on land, though mistaken, there will be no defence to any proceedings that ensue as the clause stands. These are serious matters, because we

[Mr. Kaufman]

are creating a criminal offence under which someone may be sent to prison. These disputes may not be very serious when there is a dispute in civil law, but we are dealing with an interpretation of trespass by a police officer, not an expert, who is trained in different ways from experts in other areas, to pursue criminals. As I have said, we are considering a criminal offence that could result in someone being sent to prison.

The action of the person who can be arrested need not be disorderly or violent, despite the fact that this is public order legislation. The clause requires that a subjective judgment is made by a police officer in determining whether words used are threatening, abusive or insulting, and the same goes for behaviour. That is an unfair burden to place on a police officer.

The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) is responsible for an amendment designed to reduce the number of vehicles which can trigger police action. Whether the hon. Gentleman's number, which I oppose, or the Government's number, which I oppose as well although it is a better one than the hon. Gentleman's becomes the operative number, the concept is an absurdity. Why should 12 vehicles trigger off police action while 11 will not? We are being presented with an arbitrary number of vehicles or caravans, and it is the same if we take four vehicles as opposed to three. There could be more than 12 vehicles involved — for example, there could be 11 on one piece of land and another 11 on an adjoining piece of land. That would not trigger police action and it would be the same — I note that the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) nods — with three and three. Once an arbitrary number is chosen, we have an arbitrary piece of legislation.

If police action is triggered by the presence of vehicles, no disorderly conduct is required. Those concerned may be behaving peaceably and may not be indulging in insulting behaviour or committing damage. We have already asked — no answer has been received — what is "any period"? One interpretation that has been offered is an overnight stay, but the Act will not state that. Once again, as so often in the Bill, we see the burden of disproof being placed on the accused person. Instead of the prosecution having to prove guilt, the accused person has to prove his or her innocence under subsection (4).

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: No, I shall not give way. I am coming to the end of my remarks and I know that a great many hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate. I hope that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) will forgive me if I do not give way to him at this stage.

The Earl of Caithness made a curious statement when he moved the amendment in another place. He said that the Government did not want to harass the gipsies and he gave a bizarre explanation of how the new clause would not harass them. He said:

> "Setting the threshold for the test in subsection 1*(b)* at 12 vehicles means that where gypsies travel in smaller groups than that, they will not be caught unless they commit acts of damage or trespass or harass the occupier." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 6 October 1986; Vol. 480, c 103.]

That is the protection for gipsies. They had better travel in small groups. As long as they travel with 11 caravans or fewer and behave themselves, they will be all right. The moment that they travel in groups of 12 or more, they will be in trouble. The new clause threatens the 60 per cent. of gipsies and travelling people who are without caravan sites because of local authorities' failure to carry out their obligations under the Caravans Sites Act 1968.

The new clause is unnecessary, unfair and ill thought out. It could be oppressive and we shall vote against it.

Sir John Farr: Unlike the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), I welcome the new clause. I take this opportunity of welcoming the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department to the Dispatch Box, my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). I could say "So far, so good," but I shall not make such a pun at this hour of the evening.

When my hon. Friend the Minister talked about trespassers on a footpath or public road in the countryside, I think that he was in some difficulty. If a caravan, person or vehicle stops on a public road, highway or footpath, that in itself is an offence because an obstruction is caused.

The provision relating to "two or more persons" in subsection (1) is right. It is a carefully chosen figure and I have no doubt that it was arrived at after considerable debate in another place, the reports of which I have read. I welcome subsection (1)*(a)*, which deals with damage to property and threatening, abusive or insulting words. I welcome also paragraph *(b)*, which contains the phrase "twelve or more vehicles". One has to set a figure and, as I have said, the choice of 12 vehicles has been the subject of debate. I have no doubt that if it is found to be too large or too small a figure, it will be possible later to have it varied by some parliamentary means.

I have raised with my hon. Friend the Minister the question of "reasonably practicable" in subsection (2) and I have received a reply. I welcome the emphasis that the new clause gives throughout to police officers having the power to make certain judgments, but the sort of incidents which the clause is designed to curtail, or at least to harness and control, could occur when police officers are not available. The other day my local police officer came to my home. He was certainly not in uniform; he was wearing tennis shoes and white trousers. I should add that he had come along at urgent notice. The phrase " a constable in uniform" is extremely restrictive. Many of the laws that are used to protect property and persons provide for citizens' arrests in certain instances of trespass and criminal damage. Apparently, this is not the intention in this clause, and I am not sure that that is not a weakness.

In subsection (5), I welcome paragraphs (i) and (ii), particularly the addition of scheduled monuments. The House will recall that this clause arose in another place as a result of what happened to Mr. Les Attwell near Yeovil, when he and a number of other farmers were this summer deprived of the use and enjoyment of the land that they occupy. Does my hon. Friend feel that new clause 28 will go some way to protecting people who enjoy or work on the land in a legal and proper manner, but who are under harassment and threat at the moment?

6 pm

I am aware that clause 5 refers especially to harassment, but I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would interpret how clause 5 marries with new clause 28. In the countryside there are many examples of people who work or enjoy their occupation but are harassed, bullied and badgered by many people in the most unfair and undemocratic way.

For example, a group of people were enjoying the field sport of hunting the other day. The master of the Surrey and North Sussex beagles was walking along with the hounds when a van was driven at the hounds and the master was attacked in the face with sticks and he suffered a broken arm. Are animal rights protesters catered for in new clause 28? There are too many such incidents in the countryside. People engaged in employment in, or enjoyment of, various countryside activities are being harassed, badgered and driven to take the law into their own hands in the most desperate way. I hope that my hon. Friend can say that there is some chance of curtailing those who would unlawfully interfere with the rights of those who seek to enjoy perfectly legal and proper recreations in the countryside.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The new clause constitutes a significant amendment to our criminal law. Although it provides for an offence that will rarely be proceeded with through the courts, we must always be reluctant to introduce new crimes into the court calendar. Therefore, it is right that we should be circumspect in our examination of this clause.

It is regrettable that we are having to consider a clause, introducing a new criminal provision, that has been rushed into the Bill without having been through a considered Committee stage. Although I broadly support the philosophy behind the new clause, it is especially regrettable that we were not allowed to wait until the end of the representation period of the Lord Chancellor's review of order 113, mentioned earlier by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), before formulating our views on the need for this new clause and the extent of the criminal offence that might be required.

When the right hon. Member for Gorton was speaking, one had the impression — I think that many in the Labour party still believe this — that all farmers have pots of money and can afford to go off to their solicitors and pay the costs of proceedings brought in the civil courts. The impression is that they can somehow wave a magic wand and obtain a hearing in the civil court quickly, and then wave the same magic wand, perhaps slightly extended, and employ the services of the bailiffs to shoo trespassers of their land.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith) *rose*——

Mr. Carlile: Before I give way, I have a further point to make.

In my constituency and throughout rural Wales, the reality of farming is that many farmers who have experienced serious trespass and damage to their land have a net income of less than £3,000 a year. The real income of the average farmer in Wales is 28 per cent. of what it was 10 years ago. A further reality is that in my constituency—I know because they have told me—many farmers have to rely for the subsistence of their families on family income supplement, which adds a little bit to their meagre income as farmers. There are exceptions. There are some highly successful entrepreneurial farmers in my constituency and throughout Wales, but, at the same time, the income of the majority of farmers is well below the national wage.

Mr. Soley: I cannot allow the hon. and learned Member to take advantage of the temporary absence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) to make such an unreasonable attack on him. Nothing in my right hon. Friend's comments suggested that we are anything but concerned about low-income farmers. If the hon. and learned Gentleman wishes, I shall send him a copy of our policy document which shows that. The point at issue is whether this is an appropriate way to deal with that problem. Given what my right hon. Friend said about the Lord Chancellor's examination of the civil law, the hon. and learned Gentleman should take that into account before making such an absurd suggestion.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's offer, but the right hon. Member for Gorton said that the civil law is good enough to deal with such situations. That assumes that the average farmer, including the average small farmer in my consituency with a hill farm of between 50 and 150 acres, can afford the £80 that a reasonable solicitor might ask for bringing the proceedings before the county court. I am afraid that the majority of farmers in my constituency cannot afford to put their hands in their pockets and pull out even the £80 needed for the most basic of applications to the county court.

Some may answer that by saying, "What about legal aid?" Farmers, like anyone else, can have legal aid, but if one asks a practising solicitor how easy it is to obtain an emergency legal aid certificate to deal with such a situation, the answer is that it is much harder to get than a hearing before a court. I am afraid that it does not wash to say that civil remedies are adequate.

Mr. Soley: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman suggesting that we should use the criminal law or that there should be a review of the civil law so that it is available to low-income farmers?

Mr. Carlile: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman as directly as he would expect. Just as, early in the debate, without a murmur from either me or the Labour party, we agreed to an amendment that introduced a new criminal offence with a maximum of 10 years in prison, so we are now perceiving another place in which there is justification for introducing a new criminal offence, albeit one with a much lower level of penalty.

This is an important amendment, though extremely circumscribed and providing for penalties which are not great in proportion to other criminal offences. Before I gave way twice to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), I said that farmers and those who represent and understand their needs understand the need for the police to be able to eject residential trespassers from land. The more one considers the problem and ponders the extent to which police powers are required, the more it becomes clear that, reluctantly, we must agree to a criminal offence which includes that small maximum sentence of imprisonment and the power of a court to impose a fine.

Earlier, I rather unfairly raised with the Minister an issue about footpaths. I apologise to him for raising the issue in that way. His answer earned at least alpha minus and was a valiant attempt to deal with my point, but he suggested that what I said was preposterous and I will not have that. Therefore, I shall have another go at him and this time he will have more time to reflect upon what I consider to be a serious problem which merits a more serious answer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: When I said "preposterous", I was talking about the idea that a convoy could remain four square on a footpath.

Mr. Carlile: That is just the point I was about to deal with. Unfortunately, it is not half as preposterous as the hon. Gentleman suggests. Throughout the country and in my constituency there are rights of way through Forestry Commission land, which the public can traverse in groups, on horseback, which are wide enough to accommodate two articulated lorries loaded with logs travelling in opposite directions. These are wide rights of way upon which a convoy could camp. One can readily envisage a position, especially where tents are used, in which those who are camped upon land have come there lawfully because they have a right to do so, and have camped mainly upon what is classed as a highway.

Therefore, the absurd position could arise in which those who camp upon a field adjoining, for example, a Forestry Commission track could be rendered liable to the new criminal offence, but those who camp upon the track would not be liable to the new offence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I merely wish to clarify the hon. and learned Gentleman's proposals. Is he proposing that the meaning of "land" should be extended to include highways?

Mr. Carlile: Farmers must be protected. There is no logical distinction to be drawn between that part of a farmer's land which happens to be a field and that part which happens to be a track over which he drives his tractor; nor between that part of Forestry Commission land which is afforested and that part upon which the log lorries are driven; nor between that part of a national park which is merely farmed land, as for example in Snowdonia, where very large tracts, with the co-operation of farmers, have been opened to the public.

Mr. Hind: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that there is a way round this problem? My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has told us what it is. The definitions of "highway" in section 5 of the Highway Act 1835, as subsequently amended by sections 328 and 329 of the Highways Act 1980, cover bridges, roads, carriageways, cartways, horseways, bridleways, footways, causeways, churchways, pavements and footpaths. But if a convoy partially or totally obstructs any of those sorts of highway, of which there are many, it commits an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act, which entitles the police to remove it from that spot. In effect, a police officer in situ dealing with such a problem on a highway would be in exactly the same position as he would be in dealing with land adjacent to the highway under the new clause that we are discussing.

6.15 pm

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman is full of appealing ways, but I wonder whether the average farmer attending the executive meeting of the local branch of the National Farmers Union or the Farmers Union of Wales will find that distinction easy to understand. The legislation is intended to solve problems for farmers in a way that they will understand.

However, another point worries me. I am not seeking to put before the Minister obscure obstacles which are best left to law examination papers. It worries me much more that a farmer who has substantial rights of way across his land may not realise that such part of his land as is a right of way is classified as a highway. Therefore, he may ask the police to exercise their powers under the Public Order Act. They may do that, and the farmer and the police may soon find themselves in a civil court accused of wrongful arrest and, ultimately, false imprisonment. This matter needs further consideration.

I share the misgivings which have been expressed about the meaning of the words "reasonable steps" in subsection (1) of the new clause. That point is reinforced when one sets the phrase

"reasonable steps have been taken by or on behalf of the occupier of the land,"—

for that is the standard which the landowner must satisfy — against the standard which the police officer must satisfy. He need not take "reasonable steps" to ask trespassers to leave. He can direct—for the word used in relation to the police officer is "direct" — persons to leave the land. An unhelpful distinction is drawn in amendment No. 28 between the quality of the action required of the landowner and that required of the police officer. That distinction has no logical basis.

The right hon. Member for Gorton suggested that there is no need for a new criminal offence to be created because, where damage is committed, a police officer can arrest someone for the damage. Where there is a breach of the peace and the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, a police officer has power to arrest. But those who take that view — I have received many briefings advocating that view — have failed to observe an essential distinction between the general powers of the police in relation to specific criminal offences and the helpful power contained in subsection (1).

If a police officer sees a crowd of people encamped upon land and an item has been damaged — a constituent of mine suffered damage to a cattle trough in a field on 18 occasions during a fortnight — he cannot march on to the land and arrest the first person he sees for damaging the trough. He must have reasonable grounds for believing that that person has damaged the trough. If he comes along, as is inevitably the case, after the trough has been damaged, he has a problem on his hands, because he cannot do anything about it. If there has been a breach of the peace and a farmer rings up and says, "I have been abused, threatened and insulted by a crowd of people on my land, late at night," but he has no idea which individuals used the insulting words or threatening behaviour, the police are left powerless.

The power arises under subsection (1), where any of the persons who are encamped on the land

"has caused damage to property on the land or used threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards the occupier."

Therefore we are providing something that does not exist, in terms of powers of the police, under the existing law. In my view, we are providing something that anybody — perhaps I can return an earlier jibe by the Minister — who, like myself, has considerable knowledge and experience of the countryside and who lives in the middle of the countryside, knows is a reasonable power.

Although I have grave misgivings about the way in which this new law is being introduced and although, in my view, it would have been far better to leave it out of this Bill and to include it in what I believe is to be a Criminal Justice Bill in the new Session of Parliament, starting very shortly, nevertheless, having regard to the

balance of interests and considerations, the principle of this clause must be supported. I shall support it later tonight. However, I hope that we shall hear from the Minister that the Government are conscious of the rush that there has been to introduce the clause and that they will be prepared to consider even significant changes if it is found that the clause causes difficulties in the coming months.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I welcome the clause and it will be welcomed by large numbers of people, including farmers whose powers until now have been limited when their land has been invaded. Either they have had to go to law for a civil remedy—which is very expensive and very slow; the county court takes several days to hear a case and it is not inconceivable that legal bills running well into four figures will be incurred—or they have to use the remedy of self-help. In law a farmer is entitled to use reasonable force to remove trespassers from his land. He cannot use reasonable force to remove trespassers from his house, but he can use it to remove them from his land. However, that is thought to be an unwise step to take, because of the consequences that can flow from using reasonable force. Farmers tend to get a little excited.

I believe that it is a good new clause, but I should like to make one or two points about it. The first relates to causing damage to property. We are not dealing with criminal damage. The new clause provides that any form of damage, which includes accidental damage, must fit within the section. However, damage to property is mentioned in the clause. Property that is defined in the Criminal Damage Act 1971 does not, apparently, include the foliage of a plant that is growing wild on any land.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider the following scenario and let me know whether he thinks that it fits within the section? A group of vehicles—perhaps seven in number—comes on to a farmer's land. In so doing, those vehicles are trespassing. No intentional damage is caused. The occupants of the vehicles do not abuse or threaten the occupier of the land or his family. However, the movement of those vehicles causes damage to certain crops. In the case that I have imagined, there are seven vehicles. Therefore they do not come within subsection 1 *(b)*, which refers to 12 or more vehicles. Therefore, the farmer is left with the remedy in paragraph *(a)*: he has to establish damage to property on his land.

If the vehicles or individuals accidentally cause damage to a crop that the farmer is growing—corn or maize—am I right in saying that that constitutes property, whereas if they cause damage to a grass crop it would not constitute damage to property? What classes of goods are covered by the phrase "growing wild on any land"? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to deal with that question.

That question reminds me of what happens under the law relating to motoring. If one is involved in a road traffic accident, one is under a duty to stop and exchange names and addresses. Then one asks oneself, what is an accident? I shall be corrected if I am wrong, but I think that an accident is an untoward event involving damage to people or property.

The courts have held that it is an accident when damage is caused even to a tree. In motoring law, therefore, the tree falls within the definition of property, when it comes to damage, for the purposes of the section that requires one to stop and exchange names and addresses. Under this clause one can envisage the occupants of a group of seven vehicles chopping down a tree with which to light a fire. If a tree is chopped down and used to light a fire, does it constitute a plant that is growing wild on the land, thus taking it outside the scope of "property", or is the tree "property"?

The definition of "property" could give rise to difficulty. When vehicles go on to land they will inevitably cause some damage to some property. Therefore, one has to ask to what extent the definition of "property" includes crops.

Furthermore, I do not understand why 12 vehicles must be involved. I have envisaged a case in which seven vehicles might be involved. The land of a client of mine was invaded by seven or eight vehicles, which caused great problems for my client. He is a farmer and he could not afford to go to law, despite my offer to handle the case for a few sacks of logs, not for a fee.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Plus VAT.

Mr. Malins: Yes, plus VAT.

He could not afford it, and time was against us. Those seven vehicles went on to his land. No insults were offered to his family and the only damage caused was the damage to some of his crops by the vehicles as they went through his fields. I should like to know whether an offence was committed in that case. I rather hope that it was.

Finally, one of the remedies that was available to my farmer friend was the ability to use reasonable force to throw out those people, but the police thought that that would be unwise. There was some sense in that view. However, my friend's great frustration was that the law discouraged him from using reasonable force to eject those people from his land and, due to a very old statute, the law forbids him to use reasonable force to throw people out of his home. There are many people who think that the law relating to squatting in properties should be looked at afresh.

I think that my farmer friend will greatly appreciate the thrust of this new clause. It will provide protection for large numbers of people who in the past have felt defenceless.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I begin by seizing this opportunity, like other hon. Members on both sides of the House, to congratulate the new Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), on his apppointment. In Committee we learned to respect and view with considerable affection the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw), the former Minister of State, Home Office, who conducted the Bill's passage with great reasonableness and earned the respect of all hon. Members, on both sides of the Committee and the House. However, I am sure that the hon. Member for Grantham will prove an ample substitute.

I take issue with the Under-Secretary of State's claim that the new clause's provisions will apply in strictly limited circumstances. It is precisely because I believe that those circumstances are not strictly limited that I have grave misgivings about it. The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) pinpointed the problem of accidental damage and of what

"has caused damage to property"

means. In doing that, he highlighted just one of the many difficulties. There are others. The persons involved must

[Mr. Chris Smith]

have entered the land as trespassers, yet "trespassers" are not defined. Who decides whether people are entering land as trespassers? Is it to be assumed that they are trespassers simply because they do not have the express permission of the owner?

6.30 pm

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman may have been out of the Chamber when this point was addressed. The new clause states that the senior police officer must reasonably believe that the people have entered the land as trespassers. Consequently, the hon. Gentleman must accept that the defence's first action in court would be to test the police officer's action on that very point. That is where the issue of trespass would first arise.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman has run ahead of me, because I was about to come to that point. To a certain extent, the whole thing hinges on it.

Someone judging whether the senior police officer "reasonably believes" that a group of two or more persons are trespassers will be unable to receive any guidance from the new clause or the Bill. The new clause states that the officer must reasonably believe that the trespassers are there with the

"common purpose of residing there for any period".

But my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has already asked what "any period" means. Is it an hour, a day, or what?

There is also the question whether

"any of those persons has caused damage to property".

If the police officer reasonably believes that a wall has been broken by those supposedly trespassing, but they protest their innocence and say that the wall was broken when they came onto the land, it is possible that neither their contention nor the police officer's belief can be proved. Thus, there is enormous scope for difficulty and argument. Many of the provisions in subsection (1) of the new clause are open to very wide interpretation.

Let us imagine that a family of three decide to camp overnight on privately owned land without first obtaining permission. Nothing could less resemble a hippie convoy. Let us then imagine that the owner tells them fairly aggressively to move off and leave his land, and that they refuse, saying that they are out for the weekend and want to camp. They may argue back in a somewhat ripe fashion. But if they do so, it may be said that they have used

"threatening, abusive or insulting words".

At that point, all the mechanisms in the new clause will have been triggered. A family of three, whose only apparent crime is to have shouted back at someone who aggressively demanded that they should leave his land, will be subject to a direction from a police officer and, on refusal, to a criminal prosecution. That may well happen and those people would then be caught by the new clause's provisions. The Government have introduced this new clause in order to catch a different sort of offence, but that is one consequence of it. It worries me that such people will be considered criminals if the legislation reaches the statute book.

But worse than the potential scope of the legislation, and worse than the ambiguity of several of the provisions in subsection (1), is the role of the police officer and his reasonable belief. The new clause places a great onus on the police officer. In a subsequent court case, the test will be whether the police officer's belief was reasonable. I am not sure that the police will welcome being placed in that position.

Moreover, subsection (2) states:

"If a person knowing that such a direction has been given which applies to him"

fails to leave the land or subsequently returns, he commits an offence. Subsection (2) does not contain any qualifications about whether the direction was valid. If the person contests that direction or wishes to do so, or leaves and subsequently decides that it was invalid and returns, he has precious little protection. I hope that the Minister can clarify that point. Is it to be assumed that that direction must be valid in order for the mechanism to be triggered? If not, it is a matter of concern, because an invalid direction could be given, and the person concerned would have to comply with it.

I am worried about the new clause's scope and about the ambiguity of several of its provisions. I am also worried that the police officer's belief should be the test on which the whole thing hinges. Moreover, I am concerned that the Government are introducing a new power of criminal trespass. They will turn the police into the bailiffs of privately owned land. Traditionally, we have never supported that in this country, and I cannot support it now.

Mr. Hawksley: I do not particularly want to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) about whether trespass will become a criminal offence. In Committee, I argued that such a move would not be harmful and might almost be necessary. My amendments were not then accepted.

I accept that this amendment is different. It is not a case of making trespass a criminal offence. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) wondered where the amendment had come from and suggested that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had been watching television. I do not mind where it came from, because I wholeheartedly welcome it, even at this late hour.

It is unfortunate that we did not have such an amendment before us either in Committee or on Report. It would have given us an opportunity to deal with some of these details. It is also a pity that it took a case such as that of Mr. Attwell to get the Home Office to respond. I am glad that the Home Office has responded. We warned the then Minister, both in Committee and on Report, that something would have to be done. In Telford, in my constituency, I have had experience of problems created by peace convoys. My concern is not that this amendment does not make trespass a criminal offence but that there may be some gaps in the law if the House accepts the amendment.

Subsection 1*(a)* of the new clause refers to persons who have used

"insulting words or behaviour towards the occupier, a member of his family or an employee or agent of his".

Who would that be in the case of publicly owned land? In Telford, the Telford development corporation, The Wrekin district council and the National Coal Board, which were owners, had to take action against a peace convoy. To which group are the insulting words directed in those cases? I wrote to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, asking whether he would consider accepting the idea that neighbours, in addition to the occupier, might suffer from insulting words. I am

concerned that we may have left a loophole by insisting that it is the occupier of the land and not the neighbours who suffer the insulting words or threats against them.

Paragraph *(b)* specifies that

"those persons have between them brought twelve or more vehicles on to the land".

The Opposition have asked why 12 vehicles were stipulated. My amendment stating four vehicles can be considered questionable on the same grounds. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State must respond by saying why the figure of 12 was chosen. Twelve is too many; four would be better. What will happen? With the very good legal advice that the peace convoys seem to take around with them, we will soon find that they will have 12 or 13 vans. They will just split up into two groups. They may be only 100 yards apart but on different owners' land, yet under this new clause they will be able to say, "It does not apply to us."

I hope that the Minister will tackle the question of numbers and the reason for choosing 12. My amendment is to probe his arguments to find what the position will be if peace convoys divide into smaller units.

The House should accept the amendment. It will give comfort to many people not only in rural areas, such as Montgomeryshire, of which the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) spoke, but in places such as Telford and other new towns where there is a lot of spare land and where peace convoys have a habit of drifting for the winter. I welcome the amendment and congratulate the Government on introducing it.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): This amendment should be supported because it specifically refers to those who trespass on land for the express purpose of residing on it. Trespassers have caused an immense problem in the area of Wales that I represent. The provision also refers to 12 or more vehicles being brought on to land. There have been many examples of more than 12 vehicles going on to land and causing damage and distress, especially to farmers.

I am pleased that the amendment refers to common land. There is an immense amount of common land in Wales. Vehicles entering land have been a problem for us. I refer to the problems which have occurred on Hay bluff, for example, in my constituency over at least 10 years. A number of people who resided on Hay bluff brought with them dogs that killed sheep. They used abusive language —indeed, unparliamentary language—and threatened to burn down hay barns if farmers did not accede to their demands. Such a demand was made to a farmer when these people were cutting his fences. I remind the House that the cutting of fences is a serious matter for livestock farmers. It deprives them of the use of their land because their stock are no longer contained in the field.

6.45 pm

The exclusion of such things as monuments is a weakness in the Bill. Many areas have monuments that the public like to visit. I believe that I am right in saying that such areas are excluded from the Bill.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Included within the definition of land are schedules of monuments within the meaning of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Mr. Livsey: I stand corrected.

The new clause will provide the police with the power to ensure protection against mass invasion. This is a problem area. The measure will not interfere with normal ramblers, bird watchers, or even courting couples. It certainly will not criminalise simple trespass; it will only criminalise mass invasion — an important distinction. One should realise that mass invasions intimidate the rural public in much the same way as the urban public is intimidated if police over-react and send too many officers to solve a problem. It is a matter of balance and we have to get it right. There is a happy medium of tolerance, and this clause provides it.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) mentioned the right of individuals to pursue certain life styles. I agree with him; it should be a fundamental right. But a difficulty arises when people pursue their life styles en masse. I shall give an analogy, having been a farm manager for part of my career. We always acceded to travellers' requests to stay the night on the farm. Indeed, we used to allow them to go into farm buildings. We welcomed them and provided them with a cup of tea, a bun, sandwiches, or whatever. They came every spring and autumn on their way around the British Isles. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Chris Smith) mentioned campers going on to private land and the possibility of a dispute. In my experience and in that of many other people engaged in farm management, any campers who approached a farmer and asked to erect their tents and stay the night on the land were generally made welcome. They are turfed off in exceptional circumstances, and I regard that as an intolerant attitude.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although many farmers would do exactly as he did and provide facilities for overnight campers, many farmers find it much more difficult to deal with gipsies? A particularly difficult problem in Wales is that, although some local authorities have provided sites for gipsies—such as my district council in Montgomeryshire—many have failed to do so, and the Welsh Office has been absurdly reluctant to designate those sites that have been provided.

Mr. Livsey: I agree. The Bill's great weakness is that provision has not been made for sites for travellers. We are considering some of the essentials needed for protection, but the lack of provision of sites for travelling people is a serious omission.

On the whole, the new clause provides a happy medium, achieving a balance between the rightful public interests and the interests of those who wish to protect their freedom as landowners. On the whole, the Bill strikes the right balance.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicester, North-West): I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) to the Government Front Bench and to the firing line of the Bill in its late stages. I realise that at the eleventh hour a new offence has suddenly been thrust on us.

I recall an Adjournment debate in 1983, raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), in which I joined. My hon. Friend and I were appalled by the actions of a number of people who were travelling about the country in dilapidated vehicles, camping on property and damaging it. Between 1983 and 1986 the problem worsened. We saw with dismay what happened to farmer Attwell. There was a universal call for something to be done because it was clear that criminal offences were being

[Mr. David Ashby]

committed. I wonder whether the creation of this trespassing offence will alter the position of people like farmer Attwell.

I understand that a large convoy caused great disruption in the west country. The police issued directions, the effect of which was to force people in the convoy to drive off the road, and they then went on to farmer Attwell's land. Criminal damage was done, yet no arrests were made and no one was brought before the courts. It appears that the wish of the police force was simply to move the people on, to keep them moving and to disperse them. I cannot envisage people involved in similar situations in the future being charged under the new clause. I foresee similar events occurring. The police will try to move people on and disperse them. I wonder whether the new clause will alleviate the problem.

I have been deeply concerned about the position of people travelling round the country and disrupting the lives of many others who are intent on carrying on normal life. It is right and proper that the Government should act, but I wonder why we have acted in this way. I cannot help but feel that the legislation is a blunderbuss where the accuracy of a rifle is needed. It has been introduced in a great hurry. As we all know, the worst legislation is always initiated when it is a reaction to certain events. This totally new legislation is a reaction to what happened in the summer in the west country. I accept that the police will face a great problem because they have never liked acting in the quasi-civil area of trespass. This new clause means that they will have to do so.

This is a ponderous, heavy-handed new clause. It contains rather unhelpful provisions, such as that dealing with "twelve or more vehicles" and that covering persons who have

"caused damage to property on the land or used threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour".

Where in the Home Office is there the vision and understanding of what is required? We are the Parliament of the United Kingdom, not just of England. One need only go north, beyond the border, to see the good legislation which has been in place for some years and been seen to work. Has the Home Office ever looked at the Scottish law of criminal encampment? These ponderous references to "twelve or more vehicles", "threatening" behaviour, and so on, are the basis for the worst sort of legislation. There is the simple legislation of criminal encampment. The word "encampment" is redolent of all the problems with which we are trying to deal—large convoys causing mayhem and damage about the countryside and being harmful to many people.

I welcome the idea behind the legislation and recognise that something must be done, but we must be careful and realise that we do not want to harm those people who would normally be dealt with under the civil law. For years we have seen the signs, "Trespassers will be prosecuted" and laughed at them, realising that we could carry on once we paid our shilling—the total damages. The civil law could be applied if there were a serious trespass, but, by and large, it has been ignored.

I feel sure that in the Scottish law of criminal encampment we will find what this country requires. I shall not vote against the new clause because it is along the lines that I have outlined, but I shall not give it much of a life. I foresee that it will be unworkable, that it will be ignored and that eventually it will fall into disrepute or be repealed because it is found to be full of loopholes and hopeless. I welcome the measure because it will give lawyers much work, not in the magistrates courts but in the Court of Appeal where it will be interpreted. I must declare an interest. I foresee a marvellous amount of work for lawyers arising from it, and for that reason I welcome it.

I urge the Home Office to look beyond our borders to Scotland and the better legislation which has worked extremely well and been tried and tested. Let us look next Session at the criminal justice legislation, repeal this measure and put in its place something better from Scotland.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): I welcome the new clause and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), the new Under-Secretary of State, for his patient and thoughtful response in the past few weeks to the difficult problem of the damage and disruption caused by mass trespass.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) asserted that past Conservative Ministers expressed the view that the present law was adequate to cope with this problem without the need for additional legislation. If the right hon. Gentleman had been more attentive on Report, he would have hard my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) draw attention to the acknowledged deficiencies in the existing law of trespass. Indeed, my hon. Friend concluded his remarks on clause 14 with the sentence:

"I trust that it is not a state of law which we can allow to remain for much longer."—[*Official Report*, 30 April 1986; Vol. 96. c. 1054.]

The former Minister clearly had it in mind to bring forward an additional clause. I welcome the fact that he has fulfilled that promise.

7 pm

I must draw attention to the fact that alliance Members have been very slow to wake up to this issue. It is, of course, welcome that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) supports the new clause. However, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan)—the alliance spokesman in Committee—took no interest in this in Committee. Indeed, he not only opposed any amendment or extension to the Bill to deal with the problem of mass trespass, but expressed outright opposition to clause 14 which, at that time, was the only part of the Bill that might have been of some use to those affected. Although the alliance has climbed on to the bandwagon late, it is nevertheless welcome on board.

What concentrated the minds of alliance Members was the sight this summer of small farmers having to spend in excess of £1,000 each in unsuccessful attempts to protect their properties and livelihoods from being wrecked. Obviously, the most prominent case was that of Mr. Les Attwell, who comes from my county of Somerset. He is a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) who has played a considerable part in achieving a satisfactory conclusion to that issue.

It must be stated repeatedly that the new clause is not creating a new offence of trespass; it is creating a new power to evict trespassers in certain circumstances. The criminal law will not come into effect until a chain of events has taken place. It will therefore not ensnare anyone but the most determined trespasser.

For a start, there has to be an original act of trespass. Secondly, there must be an intention to reside on the land in question. I am not altogether happy with the word "reside" because it can imply that there is an intention to stay for some considerable time. Thirdly, for a criminal act to be committed, the occupier has to ask the alleged trespasser to leave. Having fulfilled those three conditions, there has to be a threat of damage, disruption or harassment to the occupier or his family, or there must be more than 12 vehicles involved. Following that, a senior police officer has to ask the trespasser to leave the land in question and, lastly the trespasser has to refuse to leave the land. Only when those six conditions have been fulfilled will a criminal act have been committed. I do not think that that constitutes a ferocious extension of the criminal law.

I have a number of comparatively minor misgivings, and I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could address them when he replies. Subsection 4*(b)* gives it as a defence for an alleged trespasser to show reasonable excuse for failing to leave the land in question. What does my hon. Friend understand "reasonable excuse" to mean? He may say that it is up to the courts to decide that. Is it, for instance, "reasonable excuse" for a trespasser to say that his vehicle has broken down or become unroadworthy? That is a very frequent excuse at present. It is common for those coming on to land to abandon or dump their vehicles and then claim that they cannot leave for that reason.

Secondly, I would like the Minister to say what is encompassed by his definition of "land" in the new clause. Is it, for instance, two adjacent fields? What would happen if trespassers were to withdraw from a field on one side of the road and immediately encamp in another field on the other side of the road? Is it land defined as belonging to one person or within the encompass of one farm? Is it land within one parish or area? These are important considerations. If there are loopholes, we can be quite certain that they will be discovered, because many of the potential trespassers—members of future peace convoys—have access to good legal advice, like anyone else, and they can tailor their activities accordingly.

Thirdly, I want to refer to the limit of 12 vehicles. It is all right if the 12 vehicles concerned are Mini Metros, but it is not all right if those vehicles are buses. There have been frequent occasions in my constituency when members of peace convoys—hippies, itinerants, or whatever they are called — came on to land and abandoned their vehicles, in which they then lived. They were not cars; they were old school buses and the like. One was a double-decker bus. Eleven double-decker buses, which would escape the clause, can constitute quite a party. In London we are used to seeing columns or convoys of double-decker buses. However, I hope that the new clause will not encourage columns of double-decker buses to constitute future peace convoys in Somerset.

Thes are comparatively minor points. The new clause is certainly welcomed by me and most of the people whom I represent. I hope very much that these will remain as reserve powers for use by the police on rare occasions. There are many legitimate and legal ways whereby people can enjoy camping and caravanning in the west country. The Bill, with the new clause, will be a means of serving notice on the minority of people who come to my part of the country and cause damage or disruption and with whom the law at present is inadequate to cope.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): We can recognise that the Home Office has been in some difficulties over the new clause. Indeed, I suspect that it has been very uncertain about the exact drafting that it wanted, because its views have changed so radically from the first part of the year.

I have a letter from the Home Office dated 23 April 1986 from which I would like to quote. I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary about the question of the trespass on Greenham Common in my constituency. I suggested that perhaps further powers were needed to correct that trespass. In his reply, the Home Secretary said:

> "The practical difficulties of drafting an offence which applies to land would be considerable, involving for example defining the nature of the land to be covered by the offence, and ensuring that the offence does not have effect beyond those justified by the mischief it is trying to prevent."

Since he wrote that letter in April, the Government and the Home Office have been spurred into action not by the trespass on Greenham Common but by the curious creation called the peace convoy of hippies which existed in an around Stonehenge and throughout the west country and which finally came to rest in the New Forest. For some reason that convoy caught the nation's and the Government's eye more effectively than the peace women. As a result of that hippie convoy we have this new clause.

Although I shall support the Government, I do not think that the new clause goes far enough. I shall test this clause against the narrow constituency example of what we have had to endure at Greenham Common from a trespass. I shall also point out to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that his view that the civil law is adequate is far from the truth. Because of the statements by the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary at the time of the hippie convoy that the law of trespass would be looked at again and that they would bring forward new proposals when the Bill went to the House of Lords if they thought they could produce sufficient and adequate drafting, I took it upon myself to write to the Home Secretary. I suggested that perhaps what was required was an order of trespass which would enable the police to remove people who were in residence on common land unlawfully. As I have already said, I do not believe that the civil law is adequate or has been proved to be adequate to deal with this matter.

If for a moment I strike a frivolous note to make my point, I do so because I wish to quote from a satirical article that sums up what my constituency, especially around Greenham Common, has had to endure for five years. The article comes from *Private Eye* and it is entitled "This Romantic England". It reads:

> "The English countryside knows no more colourful sight than the groups of anorak-bedecked peace-women who traditionally cluster around the Greenham Common airbase in Berkshire. With their matted hair and muddy Wellingtons, these exotic creatures fill the air with their shrill cries of 'No cruise, no cruise' and 'We hate men'.
>
> And then, once a week, a strange ritual is enacted whose origins are lost in the mists of time.
>
> The burghers of Newbury send 'officials' to 'expel' the women from their traditional roosting ground.
>
> Amid much squeaking the burly bailiffs 'move in' to dismantle the primitive shelters in which the women and their offspring have made their squalid nests.
>
> All this is traditionally watched by a large group of local residents, who emerge from their large detached residences behind the rhododendrons and say things like 'About bloody time', 'They use our garden as a public toilet' and 'It's the least the council can do considering the rates we pay'.

[Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson]

A few minutes later, as the last cheers die away and the Council officials' Cortinas disappear down the leafy lane, the women re-emerge from the trees and begin the process of re-building their quaint shelters, from the traditional materials of PVC sheeting, chemical fertiliser bags and old copies of the *Sunday Telegraph*."

Although satirical, that is a remarkably accurate summing up of what we have had to endure during the past five years and what, to some extent, still exists, although at a much lower level.

I look at amendment No. 28 and ask myself how it will meet the problem of people who persist in a trespass knowing that they are breaking byelaws controlling the common land. I find myself wondering whether the amendment affects common land. It says in the clause that action can be taken only against those whose original entry on the land could constitute a trespass. By its very definition, that cannot mean common land, because there is no trespass in walking or being on common land. Therefore, the first and necessary condition for proving trespass does not seem to exist in terms of the Greenham women and those like them who choose to take up residence on common land.

7.15 pm

We then come to the question of residence, as opposed to simply being on common land. My constituents have never objected to the one-day demonstrations around Greenham by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. They recognise, as I do, that to be able to protest is one of the essential freedoms that a parliamentary democracy enjoys. They have objected to residence on the common land which is taken up by those women with their so-called claim to be doing something to maintain world peace.

The peace women do not go in for one-day demonstrations. They have been with us in larger or smaller numbers since 1981. They have cost an additional £4 million in policing and have been guilty of more than 1,000 offences, including about 300 offences of criminal damage. Throughout, they have been guilty of illegal possession of common land. When I look at what "land" is said to mean in this new clause, there is no reference to it being common land, although there is reference to the "occupier".

It may be that I am wrong to believe that this clause relates entirely to private land where there is clearly an owner and an occupier. However, I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would clear up that point. I for one would like to believe that common land, which is in a sense the possession of all the people of this country, is just as precious to us as anything owned by a private individual and that those who seek to break the byelaws which govern the conduct of all of us so that we may enjoy common land are as much trespassers as those who choose to put their vehicles or themselves on private land.

In the amendment there is the requirement of 12 or more vehicles to prove the trespass. There is also the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) which states that that number should be reduced to four. I find it difficult to understand why any number should be selected. Anybody who has been to Greenham will know that one vehicle can create a considerable nuisance and make my constituents write to me asking what I am doing to get the women off the common or when the Government Departments which own bits of that land will do something to shift them.

I have also noticed that the word "vehicles" covers both motor vehicles and caravans. I hope that those in the Home Office who drafted this clause are aware that the Greenham women, although they do have vehicles, generally live in what are called benders. Benders are structures made of wood and PVC sheeting. Therefore, this clause could not touch their structures at all. There may be a good reason for that; it may be impossible to define what a bender is. However, if somebody had chosen to come to Greenham they might have learnt some useful and practical lessons as to exactly how people live who choose to trespass on land. They do not necessarily require motor vehicles.

I have to say that, although I will support this clause, I cannot do so wholeheartedly unless my hon. Friend can tell me that my misgivings about it not applying to common land are out of place. I want him to think again about the number of vehicles necessary to prove an offence and take into account the fact that those who trespass in this way do not necessarily live in motor vehicles or caravans but can live in other structures which can cause just as much inconvenience and unhappiness to those who have to suffer the trespass as anything else he may have thought of.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): There can be no doubt that some action is required. Following the incident at Cannock Chase, paragraph 56 of the police report stated:

"The state of the site, an acknowledged beauty spot, was appalling. It was littered with debris of all kinds, there was human excreta all about the area, many trees had been broken down or otherwise damaged and there was evidence (from cigarette ends, syringes, etc.) of the use of drugs. The County Council—

I remind the House that it was a Labour county council—

"were compelled to declare the area a health hazard . . . and it was closed off to the public for six weeks while the debris was cleared away and the excreta decomposed by natural processes."

Any Government who failed to take action to prevent that type of affront would be derelict in their duty. For that reason, I must immediately disagree with the contention of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that the present law is sufficient. Clearly, it is not.

The House must determine whether the remedy of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is the right one. Many hon. Members who served on the Committee will agree that it is wrong to criminalise trespass. The police have certainly resisted that. We wrestled with this matter in Committee and at a meeting at Scotland Yard attended by many senior police officers, who wanted action, but who did not wish to criminalise trespass and turn the police into the bailiffs of private landowners.

It is important for the House to know what some senior police officers would prefer. They do not want a power to enter land and throw off trespassers and damagers. They want some pre-emptive power to prevent trespassers from entering the land in the first place. Their attitude is coloured by their knowledge that the police will meet with resistance if they enter land where people have already established themselves and where frequently those people

may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs and will certainly be in a state of high excitement. Many police officers are injured when they must undertake that duty.

The Government's approach is, not to provide a power for the police or others to pre-empt the occupation of land by those who may damage it, but to provide a power whereby, once the trespass has taken place and the encampment has been set up, the police may enter the land and, if the conditions of the amendment are met, require the people to leave.

It is worth quoting the views of the chief constable of Staffordshire who, after the Cannock incident, said:

"What is really needed is some statutory power for the Police to take action of a preventive nature to stop these people entering onto land unlawfully. Quite frankly, once they have entered onto land the harm has been done because it is then necessary to go through the protracted civil process to evict them."

While I shall support the Government, I should have preferred it if they had given the police the power to deal with the mischief before it happens rather than after it has happened.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): As my hon. Friend represents the Police Federation, can he say whether it is within the powers of the police force as the law stands to enforce the Road Traffic Acts as regards the roadworthiness of vehicles? In that way the police could largely take pre-emptive action. Is it not the case that often these vehicles are plainly in contravention of those Acts as they are flagrantly unlicensed, uninsured or unroadworthy?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Yes, indeed, and from time to time the police take action under the Acts. But they are always in a dilemma. If they take action on the highways to deal with convoys under the Road Traffic Acts or the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 they will frequently inconvenience gravely large numbers of other motorists who are going about their business by creating large traffic jams. Ironically, sometimes the police must allow a hippie convoy to proceed in order not to create an even worse traffic problem by holding it up at a particular point. Usually the police must balance their actions with common sense.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, whom I am delighted to see on the Front Bench, will respond to my general point in his reply. I now wish to make two further points.

I agree with hon. Members who have said that the definition of 12 vehicles is unfortunate. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), I would have preferred no specific number. It should be the number of vehicles sufficient to create nuisance or damage. Once the number is defined, absurd situations arise. For example, the police would be helpless if a group of people took 11 vehicles onto public or private land, if those 11 vehicles did not cause damage, for example if they remained on the road, and if the people driving those vehicles did not use threatening or abusive language. Under the new clause, the police cannot act where 11 vehicles are involved. It would be far better, not to amend the number to four or to keep the number 12, but simply to say that if vehicles are in a number which causes damage, the police may act.

My final point is precise, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will understand that the police are a precise group of people. I wish to draw his attention to the text of the amendment. Lords amendment No. 28(1) refers to "the senior police officer"who must reasonably believe "that two or more persons have entered land as trespassers". He triggers the action. He is not a senior police officer, but the senior police officer present. He may be a constable or a sergeant. But under subsection (3), only a constable in uniform may make an arrest.

On some occasions a senior detective officer, such as an inspector or a superintendent, returning home from duty or passing by in the course of work for the CID or Special Branch, may come across a group of people who are committing an offence. It would be his absolute duty as a police officer on duty to take action under this Lords amendment. What is he to do? Is he to say that he cannot effect an arrest until he returns to the police station and puts on his uniform? If my hon. Friend the Minister means that only a police officer in uniform can take action under this new clause, he should say so in both subsections (1) and (3). Then everyone, including the right hon. Member for Gorton, will understand where we stand.

The discrepancy between subsection (1), which specifies a senior police officer, who may well be a plainclothesman, and subsection (3), which specifies that a uniformed man must carry out the arrest, creates an anomaly which a precise service, such as the police service, will not find comfortable. I very much hope that the Minister will clear up that matter, so that, in future, there will be no circumstances in which a police officer, doing his duty—though a member of CID in plain clothes—is made a fool of by lawyers who attend to many of the peace convoys, simply because he was not in uniform.

7.30 pm

Mr. Sayeed: The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) suggested that this clause could be used to persecute those who lead an alternative life style and that that would be wrong. He would be absolutely right if this clause were to be used in such a manner. That is not the purpose, nor the way that the clause will work. What it will do is stop those who are leading an alternative life style from destroying the life styles of other people. Therefore, I welcome this new clause, which I believe is long overdue.

I am delighted that a reluctant Home Office has been forced to change its mind. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that I discussed the matter with his colleagues in the Home Office, with the Lord Chancellor and also with the Secretary of State for the Environment. Until recently, I got nowhere.

This clause is deficient in a number of ways, and I regret that subsections (1)*(a)* and (1)*(b)* are included. Those provisions mean that if persons are well-mannered and do not cause damage and provided that there are fewer than 12 vehicles in an encampment, they cannot be caught by the clause. Such persons can come on to land, be perfectly polite, not cause damage, have 11 double-decker buses and 50 tents and still not be caught.

I am not especially happy with the definition of "land". I believe that it includes common land, but I wish to draw the Minister's attention to two examples about which I wrote to him a few weeks ago. I have not had an answer from his Department. One concerns a group of people —they are not gipsies or hippies; let us say they are tinkers—who are currently living under the M32 flyover in Bristol. I do not see how this clause will do anything

[Mr. Sayeed]

about them. The other example concerns the premises of John Wright on the Bath road that have been virtually destroyed by people encamped in seven vehicles on the land adjoining the premises. Of course, it is hard to prove that those people did the damage.

The current law is ineffective. It is too slow and expensive. Despite what some right hon. and hon. Members have said, I believe that the police are in favour of a toughening of their powers, especially those who are in daily contact with the public. They are sick and tired of being cursed by the public for not having the power to take action. The encampments—just in the past year I have had nine in my constituency—have caused immense distress, anger and fear. The Minister should be aware of the fact that I have had to dissuade some of my constituents from fire-bombing caravans, because they are so bitter that they have been totally unable to get rid of some of these ragamuffins who cause so much distress.

The new clause is pre-emptive. I am absolutely certain that if this clause had not been brought forward—even with its existing faults—someone would soon have died.

Mr. Cash: Some months ago the problem of the peace convoy started off in Staffordshire. Many of my constituents were affected by the goings-on of those members of the peace convoy who first came to Cannock Chase. I am sure the right hon. Member for Gorton will remember—I hope that he will not want to forget this point in view of his remarks about the value of this clause—that the problem originated in the Labour-controlled county council in Staffordshire. I made a phone call to the chief constable of Staffordshire requesting him to provide the type of information to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) referred. The chief constable provided compelling evidence of drugs, abuse of people in the vicinity of my constituency, theft and the most appalling behaviour. All that needed to be brought under control.

I found the remarks of the right hon. Member for Gorton singularly inept in view of the fact that he knew, because the leader of Staffordshire county council arranged either to meet or speak to him on this subject, that this provision was brought about as a result of the actions of the county council in Staffordshire, actions which I thoroughly supported. Yet he now proposes to vote against the provision.

I notice that the right hon. Member for Gorton is fidgeting on the Front Bench. He has good reason to fidget, because he knows that he is about to let down the ratepayers of Staffordshire who elected a Labour county council. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will bear that in mind when this matter is reported in the local press, as I know that it will be.

The ratepayers of Staffordshire had to fork out more than £80,000 as a result of the peace convoy's activities. They took a very dim view of that. Farmers had a great deal of trouble from the peace convoy, whose members stole their produce, invaded their land and caused a great deal of fear and trepidation in the villages in that vicinity.

The Association of Chief Police Officers kindly met a number of Conservative Members from the area. In addition the Home Secretary, the former Minister—my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw)—and two under-secretaries were good enough to have meetings with us. We also had meetings with the County Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union.

The combined effects of those meetings and the proceedings in Standing Committee convinced me, and I believe most right-minded people, that these new provisions were required. I can only say that it is a pity that we had to wait for consideration of Lords amendments to have a provision of this kind brought forward, as this prevents us from discussing it in the detail that it deserves.

I have some sympathy with the concern that has been expressed by my hon. Friends with regard to the number of vehicles and, frankly, I would have preferred that there should be no limit on the number of vehicles. I feel strongly that these provisions are required and that they impose a minimum deterrent test. They will be extremely helpful to the police. They represent common sense and will be used to help both my constituents and those of other hon. Members.

Mr. Hind: I reject the suggestion by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that we should have done nothing about the convoy problem. The problem was created last summer, and we must find a remedy. The clause is aimed at convoys. It is impossible to stretch it to cover other matters. Last summer the farmers had to use the High Court procedure, which is slow and cumbersome. This is a quick and cheap remedy. The problem can be dealt with quickly by police intervention before the situation becomes worse and the convoys move on.

Two obvious problems are created by the clause. The first relates to vehicles parked on a highway, whether it be a bridleway, footpath or whatever. Police officers will have to bear in mind that they are dealing either with an offence under the new clause or obstruction—an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980. They will have to decide whether the offence is committed on land adjacent to the highway or on the highway itself. Whatever they decide, an offence is committed and the police will have to decide whether to move the convoy on and to arrest, if necessary.

The second problem is that the proposed new clause does not deal with common land. Subsection (1) says that if

"two or more persons have entered land as trespassers and are present there with the common purpose of residing there for any period,"

the police may direct them to leave that land.

The right to pass and re-pass applies to common land. The new clause cannot apply to that. Even if a person commits damage on a later occasion, contrary to the rights of common, the new clause cannot apply. With respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), the proposed new clause would not be appropriate to deal with the Greenham common problem, although I bow to the greater experience of my hon. Friend the Minister.

The clause is intended to deal with the convoy problem. It is much needed. Postponed deliberation until the next Session would mean that when the convoys move again the old laws will still be the only way of dealing with them. That will be expensive for farmers.

The small farmers in west Lancashire will agree that, although the proposition is not ideal, it is better than nothing. I shall vote for it tonight and look for improvements in the next Session.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With the leave of the House, I shall attempt to answer the various arguments. I am conscious of the fact that the House wishes to move to a Division, so I shall reply as quickly as I can. If I ignore some points, I hope hon. Members will appreciate that no discourtesy is intended.

The speech by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) demonstrated, as do most of his speeches, that his skills are essentially of the silver plate variety. They are showy and patchy, and after a time they wear thin. The right hon. Gentleman said that he was deeply sympathetic to farmer Attwell, but he concluded that nothing should be done. I suppose that is preferable to his normal solution, which is that, although he is sympathetic to a victim, he wants to do that victim positive harm.

The right hon. Gentleman contended that the civil procedure was sufficient. It is not. I agree with my hon. Friends the Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed). The civil law is not, and never can be, an adequate remedy. It cannot be quick enough. The person who suffers an injustice has to find a lawyer, the proceedings have to be drafted and served, a judicial appointment has to be procured and a hearing undertaken. In any event it is necessary to give at least 24 hours notice before implementation to enable a defendant to make representations. The procedures that we suggest are cheap, expeditious and effective. I agree with those hon. Members who have stressed that using the civil procedure requires money. I propose the new clause as a greatly preferred option.

7.45 pm

The right hon. Member for Gorton made a number of bad points about the ability of police officers to form a judgment. He asks how they are to determine whether offensive or abusive action, or damage, has occurred. Police officers have to determine such actions every day of their working lives. He asks how they are to determine whether a person is a trespasser. He should have thought of that earlier, because in 1977 he was a member of a Government who passed the Criminal Law Act, which applies the same test — an officer has to determine whether a person is a trespasser.

The right hon. Gentleman also said that the new clause puts an onus on the defendant. It does nothing of the sort. The prosecution must prove every element of the offence. The right hon. Gentleman belly-ached about gipsies. The purpose of the new clause is not to harass innocent gipsies. However, if gipsies create the nuisance contemplated by the Bill, I see no reason why it should not be extended to cover them.

The right hon. Gentleman suggests two amendments to the new clause. He suggests that the power to give a direction to leave should be confined to an inspector or someone of higher rank. Once again the Labour party demonstrates that it has no understanding of the rural areas. In many areas it is difficult enough to find a sergeant, never mind an inspector.

Mr. Kaufman: Whose fault is that?

Mr. Hogg: It is no good the right hon. Gentleman supposing that he has found a point, because I can remind him of the number of police that we have added to the force since 1979. If we were to agree to the amendment, the provision would be of no benefit to people in the rural areas, which I believe is what the right hon. Gentleman wishes to bring about.

The right hon. Gentleman's second amendment is even more preposterous. He suggests that we remove from the Bill the provision that makes it an offence for a trespasser to re-enter land within three months. What nonsense. If we agreed to that, any offender could play cat and mouse. The direction to leave will be given, the man will toddle to the pub and toddle back again and no offence will be committed. That is absurd. The right hon. Gentleman does not want to solve the problem. He is all hot words and nothing else.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) first asked how clause 5 ties up with clause 39 and whether those who protest against fox hunting and the like will be caught by the provision. Clause 39 will not apply as a general proposition, because those who protest against fox hunting do not normally have a common intention to reside. On the other hand, and in specific circumstances, some of the other clauses may apply, for example clause 5. Therefore, although I cannot give him every consolation, the Bill contains material which would remedy what he and I believe to be an abuse.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is a slightly unsatisfactory case, as are most Liberals. His position is: "Well, it is a jolly good Bill, but I am sorry you rushed it." Let us consider what that means. If the farmer Attwell case recurred next year and we had done nothing, the hon. and learned Gentleman would toddle along to this place and accuse the Government of being dilatory. He cannot have it both ways. We have taken prompt action to resolve a mischief.

Incidentally, the House is used by now to a division of opinion between the Social Democratic party and the Liberal party. Here is another interesting example — a division within the Liberal party itself. On the one hand the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) is giving the Bill a warm welcome, saying that it is a happy medium, and on the other hand the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery is belly-aching and whining. There is an interesting distinction between the two.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) asked several questions, and I shall deal first with the question of property. I feel like a law student being asked to respond to a number of legal questions.

We have adopted a definition of property that is to be found in section 10(1) of the Criminal Damage Act 1971. Damage does not include damage to mushrooms growing wild on any land, or to the flowers, fruit or foliage of a plant growing wild. Damage to grass growing wild is thus excluded, but damage to grass grown as a crop, or other crops, is included. For that matter, damage to a tree or to a hedge itself is damage to property, whereas stripping off the leaves would not be damage.

Mr. Soley: What about a window box?

Mr. Hogg: I do not know about the hon. Gentleman's window box, and unless it is a very big window box I do not suppose that people would wish to reside there.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) joined his right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton in belly-aching. He asked how a police officer could know whether someone was residing for any period.

[Mr. Hogg]

That phrase is taken from the Caravan Sites Act 1968, which was passed by a Government whom, I have no doubt, he supported. The hon. Gentleman raised another question about the validity of the direction. If a direction is invalid, no offence is made out. However, that is an issue for the courts. I draw his attention also to the specific defences provided for in subsection (4).

My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) raised two questions, which I shall deal with separately. His first question related to subsection (1)*(a)*, namely, who is covered by the concept of abuse to the occupier, to members of his family or to his agents? He questioned the position of public authorities especially. Members of the authority's staff, and others who are authorised to act on behalf of the authority, are covered by the subsection.

My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin and my hon. Friends the Members for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), for Newbury, for Bury St. Edmunds and for Stafford (Mr. Cash), raised the question of setting the limit at 12. I understand their point perfectly well. In the end it is a balancing exercise and a matter of judgment. However, the criteria set out in subsection (1)*(a)* are alternatives to those set out in subsection (1)*(b)*, or, to put it the other way round, paragraph *(b)* is an alternative to paragraph *(a)*. We take the view that 12 or more constitutes a nuisance in itself, whereas less than that number would not necessarily do so. However, if there were fewer than 12, that might well trigger the powers under paragraph *(a)*. I can only describe it as a balance, but I hope that I have my hon. Friends' support on this matter.

The comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) were most helpful. I do not follow him in his enthusiasm for Scotland. Although a Lowland Scot by origin, I prefer the law of England. However, there is a more serious point. He said that the provision was ponderous and heavy-handed. We are seeking to strike a balance between the rights of farmers and those of people to whom we do not wish to attach the consequences of the Bill. In making a balance, we are bound to draft criteria and distinctions. I hope that my hon. Friend will feel that we have done so fairly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wells asked several questions. He was right to emphasise that the new clause does not create a new offence of criminal trespass. However, failure to comply with a police officer's direction would be an offence.

My hon. Friend asked the meaning of "reasonable excuse". He anticipated part of my reply, namely, that it is up to the courts. My interpretation is that if a person says, "I cannot get off the land because my bus is broken," that would not constitute a reasonable excuse. I would regard that as nonsense. However, a reasonable excuse might well arise if, for example, someone was tending another person who was ill or seriously injured. Clearly these are matters for the courts to determine in particular cases.

My hon. Friend also raised a difficult question about land, and I can assist him in this matter. Land will be covered by the Bill, even if it comprises adjacent fields or fields on the opposite sides of the road if those separate parcels of land are owned or rented by the same person.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury made a helpful speech, and to some extent I can assist him as well. Land will include common land, and common land is thus covered by the Bill. He also made an important point about benders. If people are residing on the land in the circumstances that my hon. Friend described, there would be no difficulty in a police officer holding that they entered with the common intent to reside. Having said that, I hope that I have persuaded my hon. Friend to give us not qualified, but unqualified, support in the Lobby.

As I would have expected, the interesting and difficult speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds raised points which are attractive and which concern the Government. He raised two points — the need for a pre-emptive power, and the anomaly between the senior police officer and the arresting officer. I shall deal with them separately. Yes, the pre-emptive power has a charm, but it gives rise to considerable difficulties. Once people are on the land, a judgment can be formed as to whether the criteria are satisfied. It is less easy when they are merely poised intending to enter.

On uniforms, yes, there is a difference between the senior officer and the arresting officer. I would say only that in the public order context it is desirable that the arresting officer should be in uniform and, as a matter of practice, that will not create a problem.

To my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East, I give my apologies for not having replied to his letter and I simply re-emphasise that common land is covered by the Bill. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Stafford and for Lancashire, West for their support.

To my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West I would only say that we have decided not to extend the Bill to highways, partly because they are already covered by legislation, and partly because the element of damage which would arise from sitting on highways is not nearly as great as the element of damage on other types of land.

I fear that I have gone on somewhat longer than I intended, but I have tried to deal with all the points made by hon. Members. I hope that the House will regard the new clause as a balanced and proper approach to an urgent and pressing problem.

Amendment (a) negatived.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment. — *[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

The House divided: Ayes 219, Noes 106.

Division No. 306] **8 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*

Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Robert
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for raising a point of order and taking up the time of the House, but I shall be brief.

Yesterday evening during the debate on the Housing and Planning Bill I moved, on behalf of the Opposition

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

and other parties, that we should support the other place in the amendment that was carried against the Government the previous week on the issue of the right to buy properties specifically designed and suitable for elderly people. The Government challenged us on that and the Lords amendment was overturned. Earlier this evening, the other place, by a substantial majority of 24 votes, stuck to its original demand. It behoves us on behalf of all hon. Members to ask the Government to make a statement about their intentions.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As a result of the vote about which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has spoken, and given that last night it was made clear that the Government had no objection in principle to a reverse —a reverse that has now taken place in the other House —could the Leader of the House tell us whether the Government will now accept what the other place has done to the Bill?

The decision in the other place has two major and important results. The first is that there should be no further risk of the matter going backwards and forwards between the two Houses. Secondly, we are already under substantial time pressure between now and the proposed end of the Session on Friday. Some Bills from the other place are arriving here a day later for amendments to be considered. It would be procedurally difficult at best, although not impossible, for this Bill to come back, given that there would be a further substantial debate in this House. Yesterday the amendments were the subject of a most substantial debate that lasted for almost a couple of hours. The debate would last even longer if the Bill were to come back.

The Government have been defeated twice by substantial majorities, and earlier they accepted the principle of defeat. Can the Leader of the House tell us whether they will gracefully accept that they have lost on this issue and that old people will be exempted from having their homes taken out of the public sector? That would be justice.

8.15 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I do not want to inject any element of controversy into the evening, but I hope that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will take a few lessons from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) who made an effective interjection on a point of order and apologised for impeding another debate. For the reasons given by those two hon. Gentlemen, this matter requires a speedy resolution. A decision will be announced in the House quite soon, through the usual channels.

Clause 35

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS; REPEALS

Lords amendment: No. 29, in page 21, line 1, leave out subsections (1) to (4) and insert—

"(1) The provisions of this Act extend to England and Wales except so far as they—

(a) amend or repeal an enactment which does not so extend, or

(b) relate to the extent of provisions to Scotland or Northern Ireland.

(2) The following provisions of this Act extend to Scotland—

in Part I, section 9(2) except paragraph *(a)*;

in Part II, sections 12 and 14 to 16;

Part III;

Part V, except sections *(Contamination of or interference with goods with intention of causing public alarm or anxiety, &c.)*, *(Power to direct trespassers to leave)*, 33 (4), subsections (1) and (3) of this section and any provision amending or repealing an enactment which does not extend to Scotland.

(3) The following provisions of this Act extend to Northern Ireland—

sections *(Contamination of or interference with goods with intention of causing public alarm or anxiety, &c.)*, 34, this subsection, section 36 and paragraph 6A of Schedule 2."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is essentially technical and requires no amplification.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Schedule 3

REPEALS

Lords amendment: No. 32, in page 33, line 18, at end insert—

"3 Edw. 7. c.ccl.	Erith Tramways and Improvement Act 1903.	Section 171."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 33 and 36.

Mr. Hogg: This is also a technical amendment and my previous comments apply.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Housing (Scotland) Bill

Consideration of Lords Amendment in lieu of Lords Amendment to which this House has disagreed, Lords Amendment to Commons Amendment in lieu of Lords Amendment to which this House has disagreed and Lords consequential Amendments, considered.

New Clause

FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS WHO ARE HOMELESS OR THREATENED WITH HOMELESSNESS

The Lords do not insist on their Amendment to insert a new Clause after Clause 19 to which the Commons have disagreed but propose the following Amendment in lieu thereof, after clause 19, insert the following new Clause—

".—(1) The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 shall be amended in accordance with the following provisions of this section.

(2) In section 1(2) (homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness) after paragraph *(c)* there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"*(d)* it is overcrowded as defined in section 89 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966 and may endanger the health of the occupants."

(3) In section 4 (duties of housing authorities to homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness) after subsection (6) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(7) Where a local authority has a duty under subsections (4) and (5) above "accommodation" shall be defined as accommodation that shall not be overcrowded as defined in section 89 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966 and which does not pose a threat to the health of the occupants."."

8.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is the combination of lengthy and constructive discussions in the House and in another place on the likely effect of a decision by the Law Lords on an appeal under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, which has become known as the Puhlhofer case. Hon. Members will recall that earlier we discussed an amendment proposed by the other place to the Act when we last considered the Bill on 2 July. The Government were unable to agree to that earlier amendment because, as I explained at the time, we felt that it would give rise to problems of interpretation and would impose excessive additional duties on local authorities. I also made it clear at that time that the amendment was unnecessary because no substantial evidence had been produced to support the allegations that the Law Lords judgment was having an adverse effect on the prospects of homeless people.

I accept that this new amendment is intended to meet our criticisms of the earlier version and that it has been altered in order to do so. It goes a considerable way towards removing the objections that I raised at that time. I also accept that there are strong feelings in the House and in another place that, whatever the evidence, we should take steps now to resolve any possible adverse consequences arising from the Law Lords' decision in the Puhlhofer case rather than wait to see whether the decision has any effect and respond at a later date.

Under those conditions, and given that the amendment is a considerable improvement on the earlier version, I am prepared to accept it. As I said in July, we will continue to monitor the position. In addition, we are about to launch a research project to look at the way in which local authorities operate the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and to assess how the system meets the needs of the homeless. We must reserve the right to return with alternative proposals at some stage if it emerges that the amendment is giving rise to significant difficulties. For the present, I believe that the intention of the amendment is clear and that the worst defects of the earlier version have been removed. Therefore, I recommend that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): From his point of view, the Minister has made the best of rather a bad job. It should be recognised that the Government have not suddenly agreed to this course out of the bigness and goodness of their heart. When the House was considering Lords amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill on the night before the Bill that is before us was considered in another place, a similar, but not exactly the same, amendment was passed.

As the Minister said last night during the course of our consideration of the Housing and Planning Bill, he is a great one for uniformity. He believes that there should be this example of uniformity between England, Wales and Scotland and that we should not be out of step. I note from the response to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) that the Minister does not go for uniformity between Scotland and England when it comes to old folks' housing that has been occupied by the elderly. The definition that applies to that housing in England is much wider than that which applies in Scotland, and I am sure that many authorities in Scotland would wish to be able to apply the same definition.

We welcome the Government's change of mind, however much it has been forced upon them. It can be said that a change of mind has been forced upon the Minister by circumstances which have been out of control. We welcome the fact that he has at last accepted some form of resolution of the Puhlhofer judgment.

The resolution may not be perfect—I am sure that it will prove not to be so—and problems may arise, and if that is the position the Government will have to bring the issue back to the House. If the amendment that is before us is one that the Minister believes to be necessary, we could have saved ourselves much parliamentary time if he had drafted and moved a similar amendment in Committee or on Report. He could have taken steps to arrange for such an amendment to be moved in another place. It is a fact that he has been forced reluctantly to accept the amendment that is before us.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is basing much of his argument on uniformity, and I suggest that he examines the equivalent English amendment. If he does so, he will find that the Scottish amendment is different.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister is normally better at listening to arguments. I made the point that he has raised when I said that the Scottish amendment was not exactly the same as the English amendment. The basic case, however, is the same. The Puhlhofer decision was overturned in another place. To use the words that I employed earlier, a similar though different amendment came before the other place when it was considering the Bill, and the Government had to accept it because they

[Mr. Maxton]

knew that the Bill would fall if they resisted it. If they had opposed the amendment in another place, they would have been unable to bring the matter back to this place. Therefore, they were forced to accept the amendment. The amendment meets what the Opposition have been suggesting for a long time, and I am glad that the Minister has at last come to the same conclusion as ourselves.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): On behalf of the alliance, I am pleased that the Minister has accepted the amendment. I do not wish to be other than pleased that we have reached this position, especially as the Act to which we are referring is the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, which was piloted through the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). It is one of the most used Acts to face Members week by week and it is my experience that it is the one that is quoted most often at me.

The argument which led to the amendment turned on an issue which could have seriously undermined the effectiveness of what has proved to be a useful Act. Without the amendment, local authorities would have been allowed to house homeless persons in sub-standard property. I am sorry that the issue had to go backwards and forwards between this House and another place, but I am glad that at the end of the day there is agreement on the amendment in its final form. In the circumstances, I think that every one of us should be satisfied that on a rare occasion—too rare an occasion—we have achieved a real and genuine alteration to a Bill as it has proceeded within and between the two Houses.

Now that we are close to Prorogation, it is somewhat ironic that it is the unelected House that has managed to encapsulate the views of the people's representatives rather than the elected House. If this place had not had to take account of the views and amendments of another place, it might have tried to streamroller through Parliament the original provision. In this instance the existence of an upper House has proved to be effective. I am not sure how often during this Session it has defeated the Government, but it has done so on many more occasions than we have in this place. The Minister commented to me informally before we embarked on these debates that long may the other place continue to do so because there lies his future career.

We have made a bit of a meal out of this issue, but we have secured a good amendment. The Government have accepted it and I am sure that the House is pleased that they have done so. I can only hope that the next amendment will proceed with the same speed and degree of support.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I welcome the Government's acceptance of the amendment. I intended to make the same comment as the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), that the Government have been driven to accept it by the onset of Prorogation. I remember the hostility that the Minister showed towards taking any action of the sort outlined in the amendment when we debated the matter at an earlier stage of the Bill's passage. All I can do at this late stage is to welcome the Minister's sudden conversion and acceptance of the persuasive arguments that we and many lobbyists have advanced on the need for a statutory measure to take care of the huge hole which was blown in the original legislation by another place when it acted in its judicial capacity.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule 1

Amendment of 1980 Act

Lords Amendment: No. 2, in line 2, at end insert—

", or from the date of first being registered by the Housing Corporation (whichever is the later),"

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I hope that in discussing the amendment the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) will make the same sort of speech as he made last night when he referred to the standing of the Conservative party in the polls in Scotland. The effect of that was to raise the standing of my party by six percentage points. I hope that he will feel able to do the same for us today.

The amendment was tabled in another place by the Earl of Perth. He said that he supported the right to buy, except in a number of limited areas. The amendment exempts from the right to buy houses belonging to charitable associations which may form after 14 November 1985, and accordingly it has a limited scope. It is not a fundamental change and it will not affect the rights of any existing tenants. Indeed, it will not affect the rights of many future tenants, because there is already a range of exemptions for small associations and for houses for special needs. These exemptions will apply to many of the houses provided by such new charitable housing associations as may form in future.

The amendment raises the prospect of increased administrative controls over the registration and funding of new associations. We shall need to ensure that new associations are not used as devices to avoid the right to buy and do not provide houses that could be more appropriately provided by associations which are within the right to buy provisions. I hope that it will be possible to devise these terms in such a way as will leave the existing wide range of activities of the present charitable associations largely untouched. The controls will lie primarily with the Housing Corporation, which already has the necessary powers.

I have to say that matters would have been simpler without the amendment, but, as it has been introduced and will have a relatively minor effect, we do not seek to remove it. As the Earl of Perth said, the amendment is a new idea which did not arise in the long debates that took place in this House or in another place. It is new material. On the basis that I have described, I recommend that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. Maxton: This is the final farce of the Bill. Although we are delighted that at this late stage the Government are prepared to accept this final amendment on charitable status housing associations, it was a long, weary fight to get them to do so. In the first instance, the only charitable housing associations which were to be exempted were those which had registered offices in England or Wales under the Charities Act. In Committee, the Government agreed that any charitable association recognised as such by the Inland Revenue before 1980 would be exempt from the Bill. The other place passed an amendment similar to,

although not exactly the same as, this one—there are differences between similar to and exactly the same as, I point out to the Minister—which extended it essentially to all housing associations, both present and future, recognised as charities. The Government overturned that in this place and insisted that there should be a change. They were prepared to extend the date from 3 October 1980 to 14 November 1985.

8.30 pm

We have finally come to a solution that the Government are prepared to accept. It is that all those housing associations registered as charities before 14 November 1985 will remain exempt from the clauses of the Bill. Any future associations which are able to obtain charitable recognition from the Housing Corporation will again be exempt. Essentially, that leaves us with three housing associations in the whole of Scotland that will not be covered, although they are recognised by the Inland Revenue as charities.

The first is Gowrie in Dundee, which is a small housing association with fewer than 100 houses and so exempt under another part of the Bill. The second is Edinvar, where again many of the houses will be exempt because they are for special needs. The third is the Link housing association, which works largely in Edinburgh. Despite all the changes that the Minister has made, he has achieved what he set out to achieve—to allow tenants of the Link housing association the right to buy the houses at a discount.

On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and I made the point that the Bill is the "Lord James Douglas-Hamilton Benefit Bill". It is designed to try to save the Conservative Member of Parliament for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who has a small majority, but has in his constituency the Link housing association houses at Barnton. The Link housing association gave its tenants the right to buy but was not prepared to give them discounts. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West wanted them to have discounts, so that, as a Conservative Government had introduced the Bill and given tenants that right, his seat would be saved.

Mr. Ancram *rose*—

Mr. Maxton: I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman, because I do not see what other explanation there can be.

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not trying to mislead the House, but he is giving the impression that in only one housing association will the right to buy be exercised. He will be aware, as he is well experienced in housing association matters, that there are 50 housing associations in which the right to buy will now be statutorily available.

Mr. Maxton: Again, had the Minister been listening, he would have known that I made it clear that this concerns three housing associations recognised as charities. All the rest which are recognised as charities will not be exempted and large numbers of others will have the right to buy.

Mr. Ancram: Link operates in other constituencies.

Mr. Maxton: I recognise that point, but the basic point remains. This was all about the housing association in Barnton in the first place.

I find it astonishing that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West is not here to take part in the debate. It would have been appropriate for the Secretary of State, just for once, to have allowed his PPS to come to the House to make his "thank you" speech to the House and the Ministers for allowing this to take place. It has been an abuse of the House and of the other place that so much time has been spent on Second Reading, in Committee, on Report, on Third Reading and on the procedures through the other place, back here once and back again, just to ensure that the tenants in the Link housing association, among all the other housing associations, should have the right to buy.

This process comes close to gerrymandering a constituency—using the power of the House to save one Member of Parliament. The mess into which the Minister has got himself about the charitable status of housing associations is such that it would be better, even at this late stage, to withdraw that part of the Bill and start again next year. He should treat the matter in that way because he has got himself into a ludicrous position. I know that he will not withdraw the amendment, but I wish that he had the courage to do so.

Mr. Bruce: I shall not attempt to follow the speech made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), which was interesting but not necessarily relevant to the issue before the House. I am glad that the Government have accepted this amendment, but the House should not be too ecstatic about it. Some of us have no fundamental objection to the idea that people should be entitled to buy the houses that they rent, including housing association houses, but have real concern, which the Minister has acknowledged, that small housing associations and those providing housing for special purposes will find their capital base eroded by being forced to sell houses at a substantial discount.

I do not wish the House to be under any illusion that we are satisfied that the Bill has provided enough safeguards for some of those associations, although some have been accepted during the passage of the Bill. As the Minister acknowledged, the date is such that the number of housing associations that will be taken in is not great. The implication is that he has reserved the right to monitor and change if necessary.

The point has been registered, and the other place has managed to achieve something that the Government—perhaps reluctantly—have accepted. As we have that small modification, we welcome it, with the clear understanding that we will be looking at the way that the right to buy, as it affects housing associations, takes effect. We shall be looking to see whether safeguards need to be applied later.

For example, the Minister will know that the biggest housing association of all, the Scottish special housing association, does not operate the right to buy in a fair way. In the north-east of Scotland, the only people able to get SSHA houses have been oil workers, although the demand for oil workers is not high. In some cases, there is evidence that non-British citizens have been able to acquire those houses under the right to buy. Some assurances on that would be welcome. A small amendment has been accepted, and I am glad that the Minister has agreed that this change can stand.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments agreed to.

Channel Tunnel Bill

8.39 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I beg to move,

That, when the Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill reports the Bill to the House, further proceedings on the Bill shall be suspended until the next Session of Parliament.

That if a Bill is presented in the next Session in the same terms as those in which the Channel Tunnel Bill stood when proceedings thereon were suspended in this Session—

(a) the Bill shall be ordered to be printed and shall be deemed to have been read the first and second time;

(b) if the Committee has reported that it has gone through the Bill, the Bill shall be deemed to have been reported from a Select Committee;

(c) if the Committee has reported that it has not completed its consideration of the Bill—

(i) the Bill shall stand committed to a Select Committee of the same Members as the Members of the Committee in this Session;

(ii) all Petitions presented in this Session which stand referred to the Committee and which have not been withdrawn shall stand referred to the Committee in the next Session;

(iii) any minutes of evidence taken and any papers laid before the Committee in this Session which have been reported to the House shall stand referred to the Committee in the next Session;

(iv) the Instruction [17th July] shall be an Instruction to the Committee;

(v) only those Petitions mentioned in sub-paragraph (ii) above, and any Petition which may be presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the Committee in the next Session, shall stand referred to the Committee;

(vi) any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Committee in the next Session shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition;

(vii) the Committee shall have power to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom, and to report from day to day the Minutes of Evidence taken before it;

(viii) three shall be the Quorum of the Committee;

(ix) any person registered in this Session as a parliamentary agent entitled to practice as such in opposing Bills only who, at the time when proceedings on the Bill were suspended in this Session, was employed in opposing the Bill shall be deemed to have been registered as such a parliamentary agent in the next Session;

(d) the Standing Orders and practice of the House applicable to the Bill, so far as complied with or (in the case of the Standing Orders relating to Private Business) dispensed with in this Session, shall be deemed to have been complied with or (as the case may be) dispensed with in the next Session; and

(e) if the Bill is reported, or is deemed by virtue of paragraph *(b)* above to have been reported, from a Select Committee in the next Session, it shall thereupon stand re-committed to a Standing Committee.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

We are here to consider a further motion on the Channel Tunnel Bill. The House has debated the Bill four times, once on Second Reading and on three further occasions which were essentially procedural. I crave the understanding of the House for taking up its time yet again with a procedural motion for a carry-over to permit the Channel Tunnel Bill to run from this Session to the next. Hon. Members will realise that the result of the previous procedural debates was to vest the hybrid Bill Select Committee with a series of unusual powers: to receive petitions against the Bill from individual petitioners up to 10 days after the closing date for corporate petitioners; to sit notwithstanding any Adjournment of the House; to adjourn, as the House traditionally puts it, "from place to place"; and to consider alternative access arrangements.

The House will know that the Committee has made full use of those varied powers, and although it has not yet reported the Bill, I wish to pay tribute to the solid hard work and dedication which the members of the Committee, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) have brought to their task. Of course, the Committee's work is not yet finished. It has now sat for 34 days, for a total of about 220 hours, and has heard evidence or submissions on 4,873 petitions.

Without precedent, the Committee sat for six days away from Westminster, at Hythe and then at Dover, where it heard evidence from many local people who considered themselves to be personally affected by the project. The Committee has visited the principal sites in Kent affected by the Bill.

It would be improper in this debate to go into the substance of the evidence heard by the Committee. It is all there, about 2,000 pages of it, not counting the many dozens of documents handed in, in the minutes of evidence that have been printed daily. It would be equally improper if I attempted to persuade the House of the merits of the Government's case on the many aspects of the project examined by the Committee. The Committee will reach its conclusions on the evidence that it has received and will amend the Bill accordingly.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Procedurally, would it not have been a better order of events to have allowed the publication of the Committee's findings, which will take place tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock, before we had this debate? It was always understood that there would have to be a carry-over motion, but the arguments about the procedure would be far better made in the House with the knowledge of the Select Committee's findings.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Whatever changes to the Bill the Select Committee may recommend, they will make no difference to the need to carry it over. We are not dealing with changes in the Bill, only with carrying it over. Therefore, we are discussing a procedural matter. The purpose of the motion is independent of the Committee's decision. Its object is to ensure that, as the end of the Session approaches, the enormous amount of work done by the Committee is carried over to the new Session and not wasted.

It would be nonsense if, after the Bill were reintroduced in the 1986-87 Session, a new Committee had to be formed to reconsider it from scratch. That would do a considerable disservice to the multitude of petitioners who

have written and submitted petitions and have attended the hearings to explain personally to the Committee their anxieties about the project. Moreover, there is nothing unusual about the central purpose of the motion. It is the normal practice of the House, with hybrid Bills as with private Bills, to continue work from one Session to the next when a Bill cannot be brought to Royal Assent in the Session in which it was introduced. Previous Channel Tunnel Bills were continued—in 1974 not merely into a new Session but into two new Parliaments.

The Government have made it clear from the start of work on the development of the Channel tunnel proposals in early 1985 that the Bill would need to run from one Session to the next. The House implicitly acknowledged that in the debate on 3 June when it agreed to dispense with Standing Orders and permit the Bill to proceed notwithstanding its introduction late in the Session and well after the 27 November deadline which the House applies to private Bills.

Passage from one Session to the next can be dealt with either by a carry-over motion in the old Session or a revival motion in the new. The House may note that in 1974, at the first dissolution, the carry-over route was adopted through a general motion applicable to all hybrid Bills extant at that time. That can be found in the *Official Report* at column 1468 on 8 February 1974.

At the second dissolution in that year, the revival route was followed, and a revival motion for the Channel Tunnel Bill was debated on 11 November. On this occasion, the Government have opted for the carry-over route, because that eliminates the period of apparent uncertainty when the Bill would otherwise lapse on prorogation, and because it allows work on the Bill to recommence in the new Session without delay.

The motion, despite its usual purpose, is nevertheless unusually long because the Select Committee has not yet finished its work. Those who have read the Committee's minutes of evidence will know that, on 30 October, it finished taking the main body of evidence. Hon. Members will also be aware that, on 29 October, the Chairman of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central, reported a resolution of the Committee:

"That the Committee, having met to consider the Channel Tunnel Bill and to hear Petitioners as directed by the orders of the House on 33 days and not having completed its consideration of the Bill recommends that the House should provide for the work of the Committee to be continued, if necessary, by a Select Committee in the forthcoming session to which all Petitions referred to this Committee and not withdrawn and all Minutes of Evidence taken before and documents received by this Committee should be referred."

Thus, the House does not yet know whether the Committee will report the Bill in the present Session and the motion must, therefore, cover both eventualities, which it does. If the Committee were to complete its work in the next few days before Prorogation and were to report that it had gone through the Bill and amended it, the first clause and all the paragraphs of the second clause except for paragraph (*c*) would apply. The Bill would be deemed to have been reported in the next Session and would proceed immediately to a Standing Committee in the new Session. I shall return to that point, which is contained in paragraph (*e*), in a moment.

If the Committee was not to complete its consideration of the Bill in the present Session, it would report the Bill without amendment and the first clause and the second clause except for (*b*) would apply. The Bill would be ordered to be printed in the new Session and would proceed immediately to a Select Committee.

Under paragraph *(c)*(i), the membership would be the same as that of the present Select Committee. It would effectively be the same Committee. Under paragraph *(c)*(ii), (iii) and (v), all the outstanding petitions, minutes and papers would stand referred to the Committee and the instruction of the House for the Committee to be empowered to consider alternative access arrangements would also be carried over. Under paragraph *(c)*(vii), the new Committee would have the same powers to sit, notwithstanding any Adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place and to report minutes of evidence.

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): The last words of the motion are:

"That this Order be a Standing Order of the House."

As the Minister knows, Standing Orders differ from sessional orders. Standing Orders remain orders of the House of Commons unless and until negatived by the House in some other way.

Having mentioned the alternatives depending on what the Select Committee might decide and remarked on the precedents, the Minister talked about going on from one Session to another and from one Parliament to another. Do those last words mean that the Government are telling us that the motion, if passed, will be valid not only for next Session but for the Session afterwards, if necessary? If that is the case, the House is entitled to know why.

Mr. Mitchell: No, it refers to this Session. Another motion would be in front of the House if another Session were involved.

Mr. Silkin: Then will the Minister tell the House why those words were have been used?

Mr. Mitchell: I shall return to that point in a moment.

Could I add that, on the basis of the resolution of the Select Committee that was reported to the House, there is no indication that these powers would be required, but it would not be proper, in the absence of such an indication, not to reconstitute the Committee with the same powers as before.

Paragraph *(d)* of the motion ensures that the position as regards the examiners and the Standing Orders Committee is preserved. The House decided on 3 June to dispense with Standing Orders so far as the Bill, as introduced in this Session, was concerned, but if the Select Committee decides to amend the Bill by adopting the alternative arrangements for access to the Folkestone terminal site, those amendments will need to be considered by the examiners.

Finally, I refer to paragraph *(e)* of the second clause, dealing with committal to a Standing Committee. It is usual for a hybrid Bill, when reported from a Select Committee, to be recommitted to a Committee of the whole House. However, if the Bill contains a substantial volume of public law provisions, as in the present instance — that is, jurisdiction, frontier control arrangements, policing and safety—it is appropriate to consider these just as though they were part of a normal public Bill. Accordingly, the motion makes provision for the Bill to be referred to a Standing Committee as soon as the Select Committee has reported that it has gone through the Bill.

[Mr. Mitchell]

The motion is but the latest in a series of pragmatic motions that the Government have brought before the House during the passage of the Bill, designed to ensure that the hybrid Bill procedure can deal flexibly with the task of carefully considering the effect of the proposed legislation on individuals and safeguarding their rights, and at the same time responding to the need to discharge the business of the House speedily and efficiently.

8.51 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I begin by joining the Minister in paying tribute to the members of the Select Committee who have been looking at the Channel Tunnel Bill. They have dealt with over 3,000 petitions in 33 days. I do not know what the report will say, and I cannot guarantee in advance that I shall agree with its conclusions. However, I can guarantee that I shall not challenge the integrity of those hon. Members who served on the Select Committee. I am sure that they will have reached their conclusions in a manner that shows that they have been worthy of discharging the duties that this House has placed upon them.

The members of the Select Committee had to operate within the very severe constraints that were laid down in the Bill and, indeed, by the hybrid Bill procedure. The Chairman has ruled—and I do not challenge his ruling—that the principle cannot be discussed. I do not intend to discuss the principle, but there is no doubt that the ruling that the principle cannot be discussed has left many people feeling very dissatisfied.

It may be that frank discussion of the principle, of the viability of the project and of the capacity of the promoters to rebut challenges to its viability might have been helped had there been proper discussion of the principle. Indeed, it has been reported that there have been some financial hiccoughs and doubt about whether or not Eurotunnel would be able to raise the money by the deadline. Had there been a proper opportunity for the Eurotunnel promoters to argue their case more fully than was permitted by the procedure, it might have helped them. The freedom of opponents to cast doubt on the viability of the project has left Eurotunnel in an exposed position, with the supporters of Eurotunnel not having the same opportunity to argue back.

Of course, none of us can tell, but I repeat my feeling that discussion of the principle could have been of benefit to everyone, including the promoters. A public inquiry would still, in my view, be better for the general appreciation of the tunnel and of its potential benefits, and it would also allow the case of those who seriously doubt the value of the tunnel to have their case properly examined and answered.

The problem over acceptance of the tunnel by the general public remains the Government's decision to proceed only on the basis of the general homily that "it will be a good thing." Regrettably, the Government have not really gone beyond that stage of the argument since Second Reading. When we discussed the principle, the Government did not begin to make the case for regional development and sadly, during the period during which the Committee has been sitting, the Government have remained silent on issues such as inland customs clearance away from entry to the tunnel. Some people in the north of England and in parts of Scotland are seriously looking at these issues. Again, sadly, the Government have done nothing to put the case for freight assembly points away from the mouth of the tunnel.

It is true that encouraging advertisements have been placed by British Rail in the national newspapers, declaring that its interest in the tunnel begins at X, Y or Z, but that is not good enough. The Government should be doing much more. But what is probably worse than their inaction is that the Government have abused the hybrid Bill procedure by inserting proposals for the A20 in the Bill. There has been a great deal of controversy about this. The Council for the Protection of Rural England has said that the Government's conduct

"poses an unprecedented threat to the democratic planning system".

The Countryside Commission is reported to be very seriously worried about the damage to the landscape by the A20 proposals.

It is alleged—I do not know whether or not it is true, because I have not read every single word of the minutes of evidence of the Select Committee—that the Secretary of State, through parliamentary counsel, tried three times to persuade the Committee not to admit evidence on the A20 proposals. We were told on Second Reading that the hybrid Bill procedure would permit all objections to be fully considered, but we know now that that claim was being resisted. I do not believe that the Government are entitled to change planning procedures surreptitiously. If there is a case for altering planning procedures, this should be done after due consultation and a full debate of specific proposals by the Government.

I am aware of the argument and the feeling that planning inquiries take far too long and that they attract all sorts of people who are not directly affected by a particular scheme. I understand why Governments, local authorities and private individuals can be worried by the length of time inquiries take and that they can be frustrated because of the way in which some people exploit planning procedures when making their case. However, if there is to be a change of this kind—it is a major change in planning procedures—it ought not to be brought about by sticking bits into a Bill and trying to create precedents that will be quoted in future as the way to proceed.

The Minister quite fairly and properly—I have no complaint about it—has sought to justify or explain the need for the carry-over motion by pointing out what happened to previous Channel Tunnel Bills. However, we must be wary of doing something in a hybrid Bill, and apparently assenting to it, and then saying that as it was accepted the last time there is no reason why that procedure should not be used in other cases. The manner of the Government's proposals for the A20 strengthens the case for a public inquiry.

The hybrid Bill procedure has avoided proper assessment and discussion of British Rail's decision to develop Waterloo as its London terminal for the tunnel services. I understand that the Chairman of the Select Committee has ruled that the Waterloo development is outside its remit. For those who live around Waterloo this is a very serious matter. How are their concerns to be properly taken into account? Will the Waterloo development require a private Bill from British Rail? I do not know the answer, but perhaps the Minister can say whether that is the next stage. Will there be a public inquiry into Waterloo? I think that that has already been

resisted in certain quarters. However, we should be told exactly how the Government propose to proceed. I hope that the Minister will not simply say that it is a matter for British Rail. The Government must know what is to happen, and they should tell us.

Whatever happens, it might help British Rail if it had to advocate its case in the public arena, so that it could be given proper public scrutiny. In that case, those in the area might well accept the arguments. I do not know whether they would do, but British Rail's case should be tested in the widest possible forum.

Today, I received a submission from the British Ports Association. Indeed, I suspect that all hon. Members who have said anything about the Channel tunnel have probably received a copy of that brief. It makes three basic points. First, it is concerned about the possibility of a subsidy to Eurotunnel. It is believed that the Government may introduce an amendment to the Bill making it clear that there will not be any subsidy. I do not know how that would be inserted into the Bill, but that is the suggestion.

The BPA is also concerned about the possibility of predatory pricing, and is unhappy with the effectiveness of existing competition law in preventing that. Interestingly, I raised that point on Second Reading, and I share the association's concern that our competition law does not provide the sort of protection needed for our ports and ferry services. That should be properly examined. The BPA is also unhappy about the scrutiny of the safety commission.

Those are all reasonable points that need to be debated and decided. I shall not pursue them further today, but if the Bill reaches Committee, we shall pursue them by way of amendment, and we shall debate those issues fully. It remains our view that a public inquiry would have been, and still is, the best way to proceed. It need not take an inordinate time and it would provide a much better opportunity to get things right. We are concerned that we should get the Channel tunnel right, and that we should not simply leave things to private industry and hope for the best, without doing anything to take care of the public.

For those reasons, I believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends should oppose the continuation motion.

9.1 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): When my hon. Friend the Minister opened the debate, he did so in a style that was probably designed to make the whole subject sound as boring as possible. Of course, I sympathise with that technique. After all, it is no longer a case of "glad confident morning again". The trumpets are no longer sounding for the project anywhere outside Eurotunnel's offices, and they sound pretty discordant even there. I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Minister felt it appropriate to adopt the tone of an undertaker muttering a funeral dirge from the Dispatch Box.

If I judge the mood of the House correctly, this is not the occasion to give the Bill the thorough mauling that it deserves. Just a few cuffs and a love tap or two will do. Consequently, I shall content myself with that this evening.

This motion is the parliamentary equivalent of switching on a life support machine to prolong artificially the survival and lifespan of a dying Channel tunnel project. Two weeks ago it seemed that the project was clinically dead, when Eurotunnel failed yet again to meet its self-imposed deadline for raising merely the first £206 million of seed money out of a total of £5 billion of funds required. Yet lo and behold, after a frantic weekend of high voltage resuscitation techniques by the Bank of England and others in high places who should have known better, the patient was temporarily saved. But saved for what purpose, for how long and for whose benefit? Those are questions that need to be answered if we are to decide on what is the right and proper course of action for the House to take before voting for the Bill to be carried over to a new Session of Parliament.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Twice this year I have heard my hon. Friend give the tunnel its obituary: once when there was a change in the French Government, and once when he was confidently predicting that the group would not raise the money. He continues to write obituaries, but the patient refuses to die, and as far as my constituents are concerned, is very much alive and kicking.

Mr. Aitken: I am always surrounded by optimists. However, we have had all this life and death excitement over the first 4 per cent. of the funds to be raised. My hon. Friend should imagine himself as an investor asked to put his money into this project. After a great deal of bally-hoo and excitement with people saying, "This is one of the great projects of the century which will bring a new vision and a new Europhile excitement to the world," imagine the project then being able to raise only £4 out of every £100 needed for the investment. With that humiliating failure in mind, my hon. Friend, instead of whistling to keep up his courage, should read the comments of sober newspapers such as the *Financial Times* and many others that have basically said, "Whatever else is true, there is a very hard row to hoe ahead for the Eurotunnel consortium."

Simply to ask the questions that I began by asking, such as what is the purpose of prolonging the life of this project and for whose benefit is it, is embarrassingly to lift the veil from the profound dilemma that the Government face on this project. The Government have become blinded to the national interest, first, by the disease of what I call political monumentitis, and, secondly, by what might be called a schizophrenia as to whether it is a free market project or a political project. One has to ask: in whose political interest is this project? After all, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister herself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who introduced the Bill, were both dedicated opponents of the Channel tunnel. They repeatedly opposed it in Cabinet Committee meetings whenever it was mentioned by former Secretaries of State for Transport, such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell).

Secondly, there was a complete change of direction. A go-ahead was given after a meeting between President Mitterrand and our Prime Minister at Avignon. This was followed by ceremonies in Avignon and Lille and in the precincts of Canterbury cathedral among a pageantry and a sort of faux bonhomie insincerity unseen in Anglo-French relations since the field of the cloth of gold. All these activities were for a French political purpose.

It has been possible clearly to see the French purpose. There was a short-term political objective and two massive long-term political gains. The short-term objective was a French election. President Mitterrand was in a hurry, desperate to save his majority. Another problem in the Channel area was a Socialist stronghold which was

[Mr. Aitken]

disintegrating electorally before his eyes. How wonderful to be able to unveil an exciting new job-creating piece of social and political engineering. The French President had a deal which did not do him much good in the French elections, but nevertheless a short-term objective was achieved.

Much more serious than the French political manoeuvring is the fact that the French are enjoying two massive long-term gains in their national interest. First, by this project we are giving away, and they are gaining, a slice of the cross-Channel industry. It is an industry which happens to be a great British success, both as a service industry and as an industrial story. The cross-Channel industry is worth to this country about £800 million a year. Of that sum, 72 per cent. is in British hands. The industry, by its very nature, is largely British. The British, like the French, go south for their holidays. That holiday traffic makes up the bulk of the industry. Of every £100 spent in that industry, £72 goes to British companies — British shipowners and British ports. That money creates British jobs. Only 12 per cent. of that industry is in French hands. The remainder is mainly in Belgian hands. So there is a growing concern, a successful growth industry dominated, and rightly so, by British companies — British shipowners, British ports and so on.

On the day the Channel tunnel opens, whatever share the tunnel gets of the market, the balance will be tilted dramatically away from Britain's hands. If Britain ends up owning 40 per cent. of the tunnel—I suggest that that is optimistic — her share of the market will have fallen from a 72 per cent. to a 40 per cent. interest, and the French interest will have increased. In one move we are giving away a major, successful slice of a good British industry. That is very much in France's interest and against ours.

Secondly, there is a massive long-term gain to France's maritime and railway industries and a loss especially to our maritime industry. The gains to the French maritime industry are perhaps best illustrated by looking at the hypothetical route of cargo coming into this country from a foreign destination, say, South America, the middle east or the far east. At the moment, because Britain is an island, all cargo that comes into Britain has to come through a British port, contributing to that port in dues, cargo and freight handling charges and jobs. The day the Channel tunnel opens, there will be a complete alternative — a shipper will be able to offload his cargo in French ports, such as Toulon and Marseilles, send the goods to Britain on the high-speed French network, having paid dues to a French port and railway and having taken that business from Britain's maritime industry. This is a long-term disaster for Britain's maritime industry.

The British Ports Association has predicted that as many as 40 per cent. of the 175,000 jobs that it created in our maritime industry could be put seriously at risk by this development. The French are ready to seize it, and that is why they are modernising ports on their present scale, why they are quickly linking their railways with high-speed electrification to the ports, and why they have such enthusiasm for this project. It is a shift in the balance of power from our maritime industry to their maritime and rail industries.

Mr. Speed: My hon. Friend has been generous in giving way. In intervening, I am cutting out the need to make a speech. If my hon. Friend thinks positively, does he feel that it is possible that Liverpool and Avonmouth could handle the transatlantic trade and that all the freight could pass through those ports to Europe via the Channel tunnel? Why should the French be the only ones with initiative when we have the geographical advantages?

Mr. Aitken: The simple reason is that we have not invested in a high-speed rail network of the type in which the French have invested. It is the triumph of hope over experience to think that the French, who are ready for this challenge——

Mr. Speed: In seven years' time.

Mr. Aitken: If my hon. Friend can persuade the Government to invest huge sums of money in the rail network and port modernisation on the French scale, that might be a different story, but we are unprepared for the coming battle and will therefore lose it.

There is something much deeper about this project, which is to do with French intentions. The French are sometimes our enemies, always our rivals and only occasionally our friends. Of course, it is one of the cardinal principles of modern mealy-mouthed policy in Britain that we should never say anything detrimental about the French because they are our so-called partners in the EEC. However, British public opinion marches to a different drumbeat from the insipid civilities of diplomacy.

In a week in which the French Government have behaved with a perfidy and poltroonery over Syrian terrorism, which led *The Wall Street Journal* to label them, rightly, as the "Euro-cowards", it is as well to examine the roots of the Anglo-French entente cordiale, of which the Channel tunnel is the new and shining symbol. Last month the French completely failed to support the Government's stand against proven state-sponsored Syrian terrorism. France's contribution to our dangers and difficulties was first a statement from the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Charles Pasqua, that there was "real collaboration" between French and Syrian intelligence to fight terrorism. France has continued its negotiations to deliver a £200 million arms sale to Syria, and France has refused to play any part in our efforts to get a concerted EEC response to the Syrian outrage——

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Aitken: No, I should like to finish my point.

I can do no better than quote from today's issue of *Time* magazine, which sums up the situation thus:

> "British officials were furious at the faintheartedness on the Continent . . . snapped one disgusted senior Thatcher aide 'Either you're in the business of anti-terrorism or you're not.'"

In case you think that I am going to be irrelevent, Mr. Speaker, that is an archetypal example of the French attitude that worries me and millions of other people in this country.

Last month the French were not on Britain's side in the business of anti-terrorism, but this month they are on Britain's side in the business of Euro tunnelling. Why? The answer is that there is a gain to France to be soft on Syrian terrorism and a gain to France to be enthusiastic about the

Channel tunnel. Would that Britain had such a robust, if at times cynical, attitude to defending our national interest, at least with regard to the Channel tunnel.

Before we commit ourselves to devoting a massive amount of parliamentary time to the Channel Tunnel Bill in the next Session, let us not forget that we are not even halfway through the parliamentary process, although it seems to have been a marathon so far.

I should like to hear a Minister spell out, from the Dispatch Box, the political gains for Britain's national interest in this project. Please let us not have any more honeyed words about jobs. The Government's White Paper admits that there will be a net loss of jobs in the maritime industry. The White Paper reached that very low figure of 3,000 job losses only by suppressing the information about the jobs that would be lost in ports other than Dover and Folkestone. The British Ports Association, at the other end of the scale, predicts that 40 per cent. of the 175,000 jobs in the industry could be lost.

Let us not have any more "pep" talk about how the Channel tunnel will be invigorating and challenging for our exporters. The reverse is true. From long experience, I can say that our importers may well meet the challenge and the invigoration with greater success than our exporters have met the opposite challenge.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Before my hon. Friend is entirely captivated by the suggestion from my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) that we can make good any losses by shipping goods to Lyon via Liverpool, will he draw my hon. Friend's attention to what is happening to British lamb exporters, who are trying to exercise their legal rights but who are prevented from doing that by vandalism and excessive bureaucracy from the French authorities?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend has great experience in these matters and he knows only too well that the French very often win the game by breaking the rules. That is what we fear in the case of the Channel tunnel project.

I return to our national interests. The Government have one card to play. It is that some temporary jobs—about 10,000 — will be created by British construction companies and other British companies in the industrial sector from orders from the Channel tunnel if—and this is a big if—Britain's companies get their predicted share of the contracts.

But at what price? The garden of England, in environmental terms, is likely to be turned into Britain's grey and concrete land. The white cliffs of Dover are likely to become the green cliffs of Dover as a result of the spoil being deposited, by this misguided decision, at the bottom of Shakespeare cliff. There will be much environmental damage and many job losses in the maritime industry, all to create a benefit match for the French.

I am slightly exaggerating — one other group of people will benefit besides the French. They hope that they will be laughing all the way to the bank. They are the shareholders, bankers and directors of Eurotunnel. We may be decimating our maritime industry and ruining our environment, but perhaps this project will make a handful of people rich. But will it? Here we enter the realm of what I call "market forces schizophrenia". The Government have not really decided whether they are backing the project or whether they are at arm's length from the project and letting market forces decide. I resent the fact that taxpayers' money will be used to buy some £400 million worth of new rolling stock for British Rail. I resent the fact that large sums of money will be spent on infrastructure and extra policing costs for the project. I am worried——

Mr. Robert Hughes: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with care. However, he seems to be suffering from schizophrenia. A few moments ago he was complaining that the French were investing too much in their railways. Now he is complaining bitterly about the money being made available to British Rail. I happen to think that it is not enough. The hon. Gentleman must make up his mind.

Mr. Aitken: There is no schizophrenia on the other side of the Channel. The French are backing this project totally and wholeheartedly with taxpayers' money. That is not what our Government are doing. They say that this project is being decided by market forces and that they have nothing much to do with it. They say that they are simply supporting it politically and that it is all being done by private money. That is not true.

The position of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) is perfectly rational. He seems to be saying that if he was at the Dispatch Box he would put the resources of the state behind this project, or at least behind the infrastructure. That is a logical position. I agree that he does not suffer from schizophrenia. However, I am afraid that the Government do. That was revealed when the Bank of England and others in high places got up to some bizarre and, quite possibly, improper activities in trying to twist arms so that Eurotunnel could totter towards the finishing line to raise the first 4 per cent. of the funds.

Is this really a free-market project? I suspect that when it comes to raising the remaining 96 per cent. of the money, in one way or another Government forces will have to come into play even more formidably than they have so far, although not necessarily on our side of the Channel. Perhaps we will decide to play the game and lose it. However, I am sure that the French—indeed, they have already done it—will put Government resources behind the tunnel. Some of the institutions which have invested in the project are backed by the French Government.

On a pure arm's-length, market-forces-assessment, this investment is a dodgy gamble. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Minister can confirm that the first advice given by Department of Transport civil servants to the Secretary of State last year was that perhaps none of the bids to build a fixed link could be financed on a purely commercial basis. I hope that we will be able to have that advice disclosed to Parliament and the press. I also hope that the Department of Transport's own traffic forecasts will be disclosed. They are well below the self-serving and optimistic forecasts put forward by Eurotunnel in its prospectus.

We will need major debates on that prospectus and the investment that will be sold to the public. I fear that the prospectus is not far removed from a South sea bubble. Many of the figures seem to be plucked out of thin air. For example, there is the forecast, which anyone who knows the Channel ports has grave doubts about, that 67 per cent. of car holidaymakers will choose to go by the tunnel and that 89 per cent. of foot passengers will choose the

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tunnel. Where do those optimistic forecasts come from? Before any private citizen is encouraged to invest money, we need a proper parliamentary debate on the subject.

There is long-term doubt about the French role. I fear that, because the French will have so much Government support, they will not just have a share of the Channel tunnel, but will be the dominant shareholder, perhaps the controlling shareholder. That is a great worry. Instead of being the Anglo-French Channel tunnel, it may become the French Channel tunnel. As I have already said, it is massively more in France's interests than our own, and the investment is likely to be heavily loaded towards French ownership rather than towards our own.

Why should Parliament be asked to deliver by this motion what the market cannot deliver, or at least is expected not to be able to deliver? Hon. Members do not have to rely on my word; they can read the *Financial Times* and other newspapers. Everyone knows that there are grave difficulties ahead. So far Eurotunnel has been extremely sanguine.

Many hon. Members may remember that earlier this summer Lord Pennock made an irritated outburst on "The World at One", in which he ticked off Members of Parliament. He said that if only Members of Parliament would stop mucking about with the Bill, he had banks and investors all over the world lined up and waiting to go. Yet, at the finishing post, the money was not available and Sir Nigel Broackes, the Governor of the Bank of England and others had to be called in to help.

Hon. Members are busy people. The Select Committee should at least examine the whole question of investment. Although I pay tribute to its hard work, its members seem to have been men of iron whim, completely excluding money and safety from their deliberations. I find that difficult to understand. Will the House be given an opportunity to debate the Select Committee report before the Bill goes to Standing Committee? The Select Committee has not shown the hybrid Bill procedure to be workable or fair in deciding projects of this nature. It would have been much better to have a shortened form of public inquiry and to have a proper look at the real financial credibility of the project, which is so much in doubt, and which will be in greater doubt when attempts are made to raise the remaining 96 per cent. of the money.

We are in a make-believe, Alice-in-Wonderland world. There is a lot of talk about the project, but the results are disappointing. We have a long way to go yet and I do not want to see Parliament's time wasted next Session. We must first have a much more clear-cut, concrete accurate view of the prospects, and all the evidence suggests that those prospects are still dim.

9.26 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) gave us a wide and perfectly correct description, which was perhaps not to everybody's taste, of why the Channel tunnel should not be built and, rightly within the rules of order, why this particular motion should not be passed. There will be plenty of opportunity—hours and hours—next Session, assuming that the motion is passed tonight, to continue this interesting discussion of the concept and desirability of the tunnel. By then we shall have much more information with which to amuse and interest the House.

Tonight I propose to be narrow in my interpretation of the motion—I hope that the House will be duly grateful—and to stick to the motion, perhaps a little of the history of such motions and why the Government are in such an infernal hurry to pass it.

When the first carry-over hybrid Bill was proposed in the House, the then Prime Minister chose to address the House because it was considered of such importance that only the Prime Minister could do so. From Ramsay MacDonald to the Minister of State is not exactly a step up in protocol. It seems that today's Government are taking a more relaxed view of their duties. *[Interruption.]* Some may say that the Minister is better than Ramsay MacDonald—I do not know. That was in 1931 at the time of the so-called national Government. There were 47 Labour Members only at that time and rather a large number of Conservative Members.

The interesting point about that particular hybrid Bill was what it was. It was nothing like as large as the Channel Tunnel Bill. It was certainly a hybrid Bill because it included private interests and it sought to enlarge, not to diminish, the public sector. It was the London Passenger Transport Bill, and Mr. Ramsey MacDonald proposed that it should be carried over to the following Session.

The other point is that Ramsey MacDonald and his Whips had made the appropriate sounds beforehand and found that the House, in general, approved of the measure. There was a little concern and grumbling about it, but the Whips had done their job very well and the result was that, in 1931, there was no division and the order went through happily. In 1932, it took rather a long time for the Bill to be debated and considered and a similar motion was put before the House the following year. Hence my asking the Minister—I knew the answer to the question but he did not seem to——

Mr. David Mitchell *indicated assent.*

Mr. Silkin: That is good. The Minister knows the answer now. I want his assurance that, if this motion is carried tonight and the suspension continues until the next Session, the Bill will not last another Session—whatever happens to the Government, and assuming that it is the same Government after the next Session has ended. As I have said, the London Passenger Transport Bill was carried forward for two Sessions. If the same occurred with this Bill, it would be an abuse of Parliament because there is opposition to it, whereas the London Passenger Transport Bill met no opposition. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) wishes to intervene, I wish that he would do so. Perhaps then I would hear, because all that he is doing is mumbling at me.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): When the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, suggested that the motion be carried forward a second time, he was suggesting it be carried forward to another Session, not another Parliament. I do not believe that that was the case.

Mr. Silkin: Ramsay MacDonald referred to a dissolution in his speech, which I was examining the other day. If the hon. Member for Canterbury were to spend a little time in the Library, he would find that it is possible—the Under-Secretary said so in his opening speech—to carry the Bill forward from one Parliament to another. The Under-Secretary said that that was done with the Channel Tunnel Bill in 1974.

I am merely trying to point out that the status of this motion and Bill is not regarded as so important to the Government that it should be introduced by the Secretary of State. Perhaps it would be wrong for the Prime Minister to introduce the Bill, although it is very much the Prime Minister's scheme—there is no question about that. The present Secretary of State for Transport inherited the scheme from his predecessor, so perhaps it would not have been a bad thing if the Prime Minister had introduced this motion.

I am trying to give the motion an importance that the Under-Secretary has not given to it. The hon. Gentleman craved our indulgence for bringing this tedious subject to us again at this particular moment. He told us that the House had talked a great deal about the Channel tunnel. He said that he did not wish to bring this motion before the House tonight, but he had to do so because we were at the end of the Session. The Under-Secretary said that nobody wants to talk about the Bill—but he is wrong. I find that more and more people wish to talk about it.

If I go into the wider questions concerning this matter, I promise you, Mr. Speaker, that I will relate it to the motion. It is perfectly true that many people, cornered sometimes on or about to go on holiday, said what a marvellous thing it would be if they could go by a tunnel and be in France in no time at all. On the whole, those who try to export our goods did not seem to be asked the same question. The question was directed to those who travel by car, and they thought of different things. Some thought of a bridge and others thought of a road tunnel.

The enthusiasm for spending £4·5 billion — at the present estimate — to get to France, if one can, five minutes earlier, seems to have evaporated. There is now a feeling that this is not the right thing for us to do and not the right thing on which to spend our money.

There is contention and controversy about the matter which did not exist with the London Passenger Transport Bill. That was illustrated by the bitter intervention made by my opponent, the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), on his hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South. There is controversy in the Conservative ranks, let alone in the country.

In the light of that, why the hurry? Why is it so essential not to waste a single moment? The Select Committee, in its restrained fashion — because it deliberately excluded various questions from its consideration—said that time must not be wasted and that we must at all costs try to get the motion through in one Session. Many of us believe that the project will not run its full course in any event. So why the hurry? I think that the hurry is because the Government are in a corner. They are in a fix. They thought that the project would be marvellously popular, full of razzmatazz and zing. It has turned out to be a damp and sodden squib.

The Government now say that they cannot abandon the project immediately. They cannot say that they are not so interested in it that they will not give it time or that they will postpone it until the next Session because people would then say that Parliament was not playing the game. The Government say that many investors—perhaps 96 per cent. of them—are waiting to come in, so they had better encourage the poor baboons to do what they can —to come in and to make a go of it. It becomes more and more difficult to do that.

The Government now have to go to their rivals to collect a bit of money. They have to scrape it together, at the 25th hour rather than the 24th hour. There is no great enthusiasm — in fact the reverse is true — among the British public. There might be a certain amount of interest among the French and Japanese, and I have no doubt that with the Under-Secretary of State's persuasive abilities the Warsaw pact might be induced to put in a rouble or two.

Generally speaking, nobody really wants the Channel tunnel any more. Perhaps the hon. Member for Canterbury is attracted to the idea. He is a great historian and there is something historic about it. The hon. Member for Ashford, because of his containers and lorries, thinks that is is not a bad idea. He has to stick with it now because he supported it when he was a Minister. What is he to do but be consistent?

Mr. Speed: I supported a rail-only tunnel. I never, never, never supported a drive-through tunnel — nor would I. It is interesting that one of the principal people concerned with Sealink proposed just that — a drive-through tunnel — which would have been environmentally disastrous for Kent.

Mr. Silkin: I am delighted that the hon. Member for Ashford should say that. I wanted him to say it, because it shows the divisions. They are important divisions.

The Government are in a hurry — an unnecessary hurry. I believe that as the years go by they will regret that hurry.

I am sorry to keep referring to the speech by the hon. Member for Thanet, South but it was a brave and audacious speech which deserves to be remembered and considered. He talked about a South sea bubble. I totally disagree with him. A number of people made a fortune out of the South sea bubble before the shares went down in value. Compared with the Channel tunnel, the shares of the South sea bubble sound like gilt-edged securities.

I do not think that we shall have a Channel tunnel. I never believed it to be likely, but I am an optimist. I believe that it would be disastrous for the country. It would be disastrous for security, for trade and for the environment. It would mean the worst possible use of resources.

I do not believe that the Channel tunnel will happen. If the motion is passed tonight—I shall do my little best to try to stop it—all that will happen is that for a week or two the Government's and Prime Minister's faces will be saved. It will be no more than that. In the end the lunacy of the project will be clear to everyone in the country.

9.39 pm

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): We have had two interesting contributions from both sides of the House, replete with historical analogy. I shall not follow my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) into a consideration of the South sea bubble. I was impressed by the recollection of the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) that fortunes were made. I believe that Sir Robert Walpole made a considerable fortune. But it is not for me to speculate on who will make or lose money out of this project. I am merely concerned on this occasion with the interests of my constituents and the impact of the Channel tunnel on them.

However, since we have been invited to go back a little in time, I hope that I may recall, for those of us who have been in the House since 1970, that this is the third Bill we have had to consider on the Channel Tunnel. The first was introduced by the Administration of my right hon. Friend

[Mr. Peter Rees]

the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). The second was introduced by the Administration of which the right hon. Member for Deptford was a Member. The third was introduced by this Administration. The right hon. Member for Deptford was the Chief Whip at the time of the second Bill and, therefore, presumably mobilised support for it.

The simple point on which we have to focus tonight is whether we want to proceed with the existing Bill or whether we want it withdrawn or killed off only to pave the way—my hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt correct me if I am not right and make the Government's intention clear—for the introduction of a new Bill in the new Session.

Mr. Silkin: The right hon. and learned Gentleman should always get his facts correct. I was Chief Whip before he came into the House and I was sacked before he ever came into it.

Mr. Rees: I am sorry to intrude into the right hon. Gentleman's private grief. If my memory was inaccurate on the precise post which he held after the general election in 1974, at least I am accurate in recalling that he was a member of the Cabinet which commended the second Bill to the House.

Mr. Silkin: I wish the right hon. and learned Gentleman would get his facts right. I was not a member of the Cabinet until six months afterwards.

Mr. Rees: At any rate, the doctrine of collective responsibility no doubt embraced the right hon. Gentleman closely and warmly. At least I am accurate on that. He cannot deny that.

The sole issue on which we are focusing is whether we want to kill off the Bill tonight and pave the way for, perhaps, a fresh Bill to be introduced in the next Session. I would find that a rather daunting prospect and I shall say precisely why. It is not because I have lost any zest for debate on this great subject. As the right hon. Gentleman said, there will be aeons of time in the next Session to devote ourselves to this gripping subject.

But before we play the battle through to its conclusion we must consider the interests of the people most directly affected. I must emphasise that a range of decisions, both business and personal, have been shirked because of the uncertainty created by the Bill and whether it will reach the statute book. Let me reduce the matter to a level which may even evoke a sympathetic response from the right hon. Gentleman. There are small people who are unable to sell their houses at the moment because of the uncertainty about whether the Channel tunnel and its works will cut across their gardens. We should be concerned about them and their interests before we become too enmeshed in considering the history of the South sea bubble and other such grandiose analogies.

I should like to see some certainty brought into the matter. I do not mind whether the Bill is killed off by a vote of the House or allowed to proceed by a vote of the House. I do not mind if it is killed off by those who are invited and decline to offer sufficient money to see it through. Some certainty must be brought into the matter and it would be a great pity if we caused merely a slight delay and paved the way for my long-suffering hon. Friend the Minister of State to introduce a new Bill in the new Session. In that case we would get the worst of every world. If on Third Reading the Bill is killed, I have no doubt that that will generate a great deal of enthusiasm in certain parts of east Kent and not least in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: And in Southend.

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has been remarkably consistent on a number of issues and I have no doubt that he sees this Bill, not unfairly, as a dimension in the long debate about the European Community and Britain's role in it. I do not want to prevent my hon. Friend enlarging the debate, even if he were allowed to do so.

Mr. Taylor: That is why my right hon. and learned Friend is against it.

Mr. Rees: I can assure my hon. Friend that I have made my position absolutely clear in interventions during the course of this Session. It is a matter of regret that we do not yet know the conclusions of the Select Committee. I should like to join other hon. Members in paying my tribute to the patience of the Select Committee. It had to deal with an enormous weight of evidence and it must have been a relief for the members of that Committee that neither my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South nor I were in a position to give evidence. Our absence did not preclude our constituents and those of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) from giving a great deal of pointed and powerful evidence. No doubt that evidence has been carefully sifted and we await with keen interest the conclusions that the Select Committee may have reached and may announce tomorrow.

The Select Committee was able to rise early on the first day during which it heard evidence in my constituency and was able to see at first hand the operations of the port of Dover. I hope that that made a deep impression on the Committee. Whatever its conclusions, the debate will continue into the next Session if the House so wills. A key issue is that there should be fair competition between the Channel tunnel—if the House agrees that it should go ahead — and the ferries that operate from the constituencies of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South. It may be that some other hon. Friends have an interest in ensuring fair competition.

That is one of the central issues, so we must ensure that the same measure of safety is demanded of the operators of the Channel tunnel as is demanded of the ferry operators. There is also the matter of customs and immigration procedures. I understand that those will be matters for the Standing Committee and that the Select Committee was prevented by its terms of reference from going into them.

Other matters concern the environment and communications. If Dover, Folkestone and Ramsgate are to compete fairly with the tunnel, it is crucial that communications in east Kent should be thoroughly and carefully examined. I am thinking here of the railway line which joins Folkestone-Dover to Deal, Sandwich and Thanet. Perhaps understandably, British Rail was a little equivocal, a little hesitant, in its assurances about the continuation of that line into the 21st century. That is a

matter of considerable importance. Roads are also important and it is a matter of pain and regret to me that in spite of the Dover bypass and the connection from Dunkirk and Boughton to Dover, there is not a dual carriageway all the way down to the port of Dover.

As Dover is the main roll-on, roll-off port and the major passenger port of the kingdom, I think that the time has come when my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Transport should consider carefully whether the dualling of the A2 down to the port of Dover should not be accorded much higher priority. Beyond that, there is the question of the A20-M20 extension. I am fully aware of the sensitivities that must be considered in incorporating into the Bill an extension into the town of Dover, and any point of entry that the Department chooses—it gave us a preview of its thinking some years ago—is bound to be highly sensitive. I hope, however, that at least it will be possible to retain in the Bill the extension that takes the road round and beyond the village of Capel le Ferne. Capel has been promised a bypass for many years and the weight of traffic that will be generated by the works on the tunnel will justify the incorporation of the bypass in the Bill.

Secondly, I believe that the retention of the relevant clauses in the Bill will be an earnest or pledge to the inhabitants of Dover, especially the operators in and from the port of Dover, that they will have a proper connection to the motorway network. If there were any doubt or hesitation about that, that would be to build in a tremendous advantage for the tunnel and would put the ferry operators and port operators at Dover in an unacceptably disadvantaged position. I hope that, even at this late stage, the members of the Select Committee and the Minister of State will give due weight to that consideration.

There will be many other matters to which, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, we shall return, if the House passes the order, during the next Session. As time is short, I do not want to explore once again all the general considerations that the House should take into account in considering the Bill. I hope very much that my hon. Friend the Minister of State and all those who have a direct hand in this important question that is crucial for the future of east Kent, and for my constituency in particular, will bear in mind the fundamental princple tht there should be fair competition and that nothing should be weighted in favour of the Channel tunnel against the operations of the ferries and ports of east Kent.

As I do not believe that the present cloud of uncertainty should hang over east Kent any longer, and as I should like to see the matter thrashed through to a conclusion one way or another in the next Session, I will not be joining right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches in voting against the order.

9.53 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Paragraph *(c)* (vi) of the motion reads:

"Any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Committee in the next Session shall, subject to the rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition".

I am not making a facetious point in suggesting that one of the limits of the motion is that it was clearly drawn up by a man. Several of the petitioners from my constituency are of the other sex, and several of them found it extremely difficult to put their views to the Select Committee.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, in endorsing the integrity of the members of the Select Committee. It may be that, as in other cases, some Members have more integrity than others. That will remain to be seen in due course. The reality is that, whereas the original Bill and the order say that individual persons of whatever sex are entitled to be heard, the Select Committee procedure has been such that considerable pressure has been put on the individual petitioner not to take time in putting his or her case.

Again, the Select Committee is up against difficulties. I am not suggesting that it is a matter of pressure from the Government to make sure that the business is done by a certain time or date. The Committee does not need such pressure to realise that it has many petitions with which to deal. But there is no way in which the Select Committee has fulfilled the commitment given by the then Secretary of State for Transport that the Committee's procedure would be not only as good as but better than a public inquiry. In a public inquiry, major issues such as whether a single London terminus should be the sole outlet for traffic would not have been dealt with by taking evidence on only one and a half days. This is of considerable importance, as my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North pointed out. I am glad that he supported the case for a public inquiry into the sole use of Waterloo as an outlet for Channel tunnel traffic.

Furthermore, there is no way in which a public inquiry would have allowed a major development proposal such as the sole use of Waterloo to be made without the proposers having been called to give evidence. It is scandalous—I am sure that the Government Ministers on the Front Bench are gripped by this matter, as they are paying such close attention to it — that a Select Committee should have been given terms of reference in which neither British Rail nor Customs and Excise is called upon to set its case before the Committee.

I can illustrate that by some figures. Indirectly, through the Government's agent, we have learnt in evidence to the Select Committee that the traffic impact estimates for Waterloo given or used by British Rail assume 6 million passengers a year. However, British Rail is now talking —it depends on what day one gets it—of 15 million to 20 million passengers a year passing through Waterloo. One does not need to be a mathematical genius to see that if one takes a number, say 6 million, and trebles it as British Rail has done, and then subtracts some passengers getting off at Ashford, the result is not the 6 million on which British Rail is basing its figures for estimates of traffic congestion and the viability of traffic use around the station.

The reality is that the congestion is likely to be horrendous. The Minister kindly agreed to come to Waterloo, and he may be surprised to know that there is no special barb about to follow my thanking him on behalf of the local community for doing so. He spent more time there than the Select Committee and went round the environs of Waterloo seeing the local community and the way in which the traffic access ramps could not possibly take three-lane traffic, as is anticipated in British Rail's plan. Anybody standing outside to catch a cab at

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

Waterloo, or coming out of Waterloo East, should face the fact that British Rail is proposing three-lane traffic in that area without widening the road.

Ministers of both parties and Back-Bench Members have stressed that nobody has a magic formula for reversing inner-city decline and stemming the crisis into which the inner city has fallen. After seeing the area, the local community, the housing, and the efforts made by the community to make this part of the inner city flourish, the Minister told a television programme that he had learnt a great deal. He said that he had not appreciated just how many new housing and community projects there were in the area, and that British Rail had a case to answer on the traffic impact and about dispersal of traffic, and whether there should be a single flagship terminal.

I welcome the fact that the Minister was able to say that. However, such issues are not being addressed by the Select Committee. It is not clear to me, as the hon. Member who represents the Vauxhall constituency, just when these issues will be properly addressed. Nor is it clear, I regret to say, whether the Department of Transport has any clear idea what the total traffic impact on the south bank is likely to be of another 20 million passengers a year and an estimated 4 million vehicles a year coming into or going out of Waterloo.

The proposal has now been made by London Regional Transport that the National Bus Company terminal should be moved from Victoria station, where its lease from Grosvenor Estates is running out, to either of two sites in London, one of which is at Vauxhall bridge. This is relevant to the entire matter of the commercial viability of the Channel tunnel project. British Rail has been challenged on where the traffic coming out of Waterloo will go.

Will the bus tour operators be linking up with the rail link? Will the traffic go across Westminster bridge and Waterloo bridge into central London? "Oh no," British Rail said. "It will be using the south bank and embankment routes and going either west or north across Chelsea bridge or Albert bridge." That could be tremendous if we were considering only buses coming out of Waterloo, but the problem is that the traffic may now run into another 240 buses an hour going into or coming out of the new National Bus Company terminal at the Vauxhall Cross intersection.

I have tabled questions to Ministers on this——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): This is the first proposal that I have heard that will have such a strategic impact on London. It is a pity that we do not have a strategic planning authority to assess it. The idea of a National Bus Company terminal at Vauxhall is surprising and almost inconceivable.

Mr. Holland: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. I must say that not only I, but many in the local community were staggered to find that, of the range of possible sites being considered, only in the past few weeks has London Regional Transport come to consider Vauxhall as one of its two main options; and, taking its hint from the way that the role of public inquiries has been downgraded by the Government's handling of the Channel tunnel issue, LRT gave notice only a few weeks ago that evidence from the local community supporting or protesting against the proposal had to be in by the end of October. That meant that the local authority—in this case Lambeth — could not even consider the new proposal in any detail. It had no details of the new proposal that it could submit in time to its normal monthly planning committee. Lambeth therefore has not been in a position to give proper evidence.

That is directly relevant to Waterloo. British Rail wants to get away with traffic congestion figures based on 6 million passengers, when it is now talking about 20 million. Indeed, 20 million passengers could be critical to the commercial viability of the project. It is not at all apparent that the road network on the south bank can take either the additional traffic from a London bus terminal at Vauxhall Cross or the additional traffic at Waterloo. It certainly cannot take both.

In that context, I put it to the House that the case for a public inquiry into the Waterloo issue, as there may or may not be recommendations for public inquiries involving other road networks associated with the Channel tunnel project, is evidenced by this simple fact. The traffic throughput at Waterloo with a 20 million passenger flow would be equivalent to one jumbo jet entering or leaving Waterloo station every three and a half minutes. The total passenger flow at Waterloo would be equivalent to that at Gatwick airport.

Is it conceivable that a new airport or traffic flows of that kind, would be accepted by Parliament without proper and due scrutiny? Instead, the matter was considered for two and a half days, including the evidence that was put to the Select Committee both by local community groups and by Lambeth council. It is essential that these issues are considered not only by a Standing Committee, which would face similar pressures to those that were faced by the Select Committee, but by a public inquiry.

Furthermore, British Rail is not being called to give evidence to the Select Committee. I referred to this yesterday at Question Time. An article in the *New Civil Engineer* of 30 October said that, according to British Rail market analyst Ken Gibbs, British Rail is planning a new —it is called top secret—Channel rail link to get a fast rail service from the coast to London. In his reply to my question yesterday the Minister said that he knew

"of no authoritative suggestion that there should be a new rail line from the coast to Victoria". — [*Official Report*, 3 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. 671.]

That lets the Minister off the hook on two grounds. First, the decision about what is or is not authoritative is entirely subjective. The Minister can decide that something carries authority and that something else does not. Tonight we want to know whether it has come to his attention that any proposal has been made by anybody regarding such a link. Secondly, we want to know whether it has been considered, as Ken Gibbs is alleged to have said, by British Rail. Furthermore, we need to know its implications for the Channel tunnel project, especially the case for dispersal and the case for the use of Waterloo, rather than Victoria, as a flagship terminal.

I quote from the *New Civil Engineer*, the magazine of the Institute of Civil Engineers. It says that Mr. Gibbs apparently

"declined to reveal details of BR's plans to deal with the shortfall in capacity but it is understood a new line would leave the London-Dover line near Paddock Wood, pass to the east of the hillside village of Ightham and either travel along

the M25 corridor before rejoining the main line north of Sevenoaks or continue due north joining the Rochester main line near Swanley."

I do not know what Conservative Members feel about such a new rail line proposal, which has implications for a least some of their constituents.

No evidence has been given by British Rail to the Select Committee because British Rail is not being called upon to give evidence to it. However, the implication — I quote from this article in the *New Civil Engineer* of only a few days ago—is:

"This latter option gives the possibility of routing Chunnel traffic into Victoria station, relieving the anticipated pressure of 20 million passengers per year at Waterloo by the turn of the century."

Officially, British Rail and Eurotunnel are denying the existence of these plans. However, observers have commented:

"BR would do well to hide high speed plans until the Channel tunnel is built. If the tunnel was in place and the network seen to be patently inadequate, then the argument for the new railway would be clear. To publicly acknowledge the need for it before work on the fixed link had even begun would risk an embarrassing public row . . . Few forget that public outcry over a similar plan in 1974 helped scotch the previous Chunnel venture."

Whether or not one supports or opposes a fixed rail link, these are matters to which hon. Members as well as the Select Committee have a right to answers now from the Government.

If we are to take the Select Committee and Standing Committee procedure seriously, and whether we are to vote for or against this order tonight, hon. Members need to know what is in the pipeline and what is being considered. It is alleged that this new rail link will be privately financed and privately operated. That might appeal to Conservative Members. They will not be surprised to hear that it does not appeal to me. In the same way a further issue arises, because British Rail has apparently admitted to that magazine, although not to the House, that at peak times, with commuter traffic coming into Waterloo, it will not be able to accommodate more than two trains an hour, whereas it needs four trains an hour for commercial viability. The Minister should answer those questions tonight.

I have another point that will no doubt enthral the House. At some time or another most of us have played with trains, and know that with a single track and a loop, or even two tracks, the problem of how a fast train is to pass a slower train arises. No wonder British Rail wants an entirely new fixed system. If the project is to be commercially viable, the trains must run on time. Someone somewhere else once said that the trains had to run on time, and would do so. It is interesting that in his analysis of Fascist Italy, Dennis Mack Smith considered Mussolini's claim that the trains ran on time. He found that by and large the inter-city trains ran on time, but that as the track was inadequate, any local passenger train or goods train in the way was shunted off the main line. Indeed, freight was lost for weeks and months in Italy in the 1930s. I am glad that that brings at least half a smile to the faces of some Conservative Members.

What will happen to traffic, including commuter traffic, in the south-east of England if Channel tunnel trains are to run on time, on inadequate track? Their dictates will be fulfilled and commuter traffic will be pushed out of the way. Happily, I am not suggesting that a commuter train will be lost, never to be found again, as apparently happened to the local freight traffic in Italy, but commuters will be pushed out of the way in other ways. Their services will be slower, and will be disrupted. Commuters will obtain a second-class service because of the imperatives of the link.

Those issues should be addressed in the Bill. What rights will the private operators of such a new rail link have? Who will take the decision on the priority allocation of trains? Are the Government going to back the tunnel operators and give them a commitment that they will have priority in the use of lines? Will there be a new private line?

I am well aware that several Conservative Members wish to speak, and there will no doubt be a sigh of relief when I say that I am about to conclude my speech. But I have this to add. The Secretary of State is supposed to be a serious politician. That may come as a surprise to my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), but the Secretary of State is supposed to be on his way up within the Conservative party. I am sorry that he is not in the Chamber, but no doubt he will return shortly. Indeed, we even heard recently that he is a possible contender in due course for the leadership. Consequently, I suggest that the Minister should get a message through to the Secretary of State.

If the Secretary of State endorses such a crass muddle over the impact of local traffic, he will not make any positive reputation for himself in the House, but he will become known as the man who made the biggest planning bungle of the 20th century. That would be bad for travellers on the Channel fixed link, bad for commuters and bad finance. If the Government had any sense, they would come clean about the matter, put the issues to the House and hold a public inquiry to enable them to be properly considered.

10.13 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). I certainly hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench also listened to him carefully, because he spoke about a major problem that has been thrown up by the Channel tunnel project. I refer to the arrival and departure of passengers at the London terminal. It is important and right that the hon. Gentleman should raise that matter. His is the one voice in the House that speaks of this problem in his constituency. It is quite right that he should. I am interested in his comments.

We are considering a motion to suspend consideration of this Bill and to take it into the next Session of Parliament. The views of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) have been attacked by other hon. Members before. I have great admiration for my hon. Friend, but I do not understand why he should be against the Channel tunnel. It certainly does not serve his constituents to speak as he does. I suggest that my hon. Friend is against the French, the Common Market and the Community. I suggest that that underlies everything that he has said tonight and on many occasions in the House, in public, in the press and in articles that he has written which express his opinion so strongly, so dramatically and so passionately against this fixed link. He disclosed tonight in his speech, to which we listened with interest — we must listen because he is a highly intelligent man who serves his constituents and Parliament well—the reasons why, like my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), he is passionately against Europe. Okay, it is quite true.

Mr. Aitken *rose*——

Mr. Crouch: If I may develop this point, I shall then willingly give way.

We are discussing whether to consider the Channel Tunnel Bill — the fixed link from this country to the continent of Europe—in the next Session of Parliament. I happen to be in favour of it—not that my constituents are in favour of it—because I believe it is in favour of Great Britain and its economic, social and future development. I could be wrong, so could the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the present Secretary of State for Transport and successive Secretaries of State for Transport.

There is another view—that it is not right to have a fixed link and it is a disadvantage. The right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) does not believe it would be to our economic advantage. He has honourably and strongly held the view over many years that he is not in favour of our membership of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Aitken: I know that my hon. Friend would not wish to misrepresent my motives. I have spoken so often about the Channel tunnel that I cannot always repeat everything on every single occasion I speak. I am against the Channel tunnel on national grounds, for the reasons outlined tonight and on other occasions. On local grounds, I have a very strong constituency reason, strongly supported by my constituents. The reason is that Ramsgate is Britain's second biggest Channel port. It is highly vulnerable to a loss of business of the kind that the Channel tunnel is almost certain to provide. For that reason alone, I assure my hon. Friend that my stand is highly popular in my constituency, and that is a very good local motive.

Mr. Crouch: It is not for me to question how my hon. Friend's constituents view the matter. He is the judge of that. He knows how his constituency views it. I am sure he is popular, but I think he is wrong. I do not think there are many in this country who agree with him. He said the idea of this fixed link — this Channel tunnel — was a question of monumentitis and that is why it is being done.

There is another voice echoing in the House tonight. It comes from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and it is a typical voice. My hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East and for Thanet, South are typical. They do not want to see any monument to any progress. They used a phrase which I shall use against them. They do not want to see progress or achievement. They do not want to be 19th century entrepreneurs. They want to be 20th century backward thinkers. I say that with all the passion I can command, because I believe in the future of our country. Few of us seem to have the guts to believe in the future of this country — much better to close the door, lift the drawbridge and say, "Let us be little Englanders." If ever there were a little Englander in the House, it is the right hon. Member for Deptford. Of course, he is honourable—little Englanders can be quite honourable—but he is such a person.

Mr. Silkin: I am a large Commonwealther.

Mr. Crouch: When the right hon. Gentleman talks of the Commonwealth, I cannot help but think that perhaps in my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South there lingers, even for family reasons, a longing for what was once called empire and for what the right hon. Member for Deptford calls Commonwealth. I give no ground to anyone in my belief in the Commonwealth, but I believe also in our links with Europe.

It is right to debate the Bill in the next Session, because it needs further consideration. The hon. Member for Vauxhall has told us that further consideration of the London content and problem is needed, and I agree with him. Many environmental problems in Kent need further consideration in the House and in the other place. More time should be given to them. That is why I agree with this motion.

I do not want to be too unkind in criticising hon. Members because their views differ from mine. If one raises one's voice in passion, that is the custom of the House and it is encouraged by the House. Whether one wants that or not, it cannot be helped. One raises one's voice because one believes in one's view, and one may be wrong. As I have said before in talking about this project, many of my constituents think that I am wrong. Perhaps I am wrong, but perhaps not. I am not saying this just to support my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. That has not been my wont. I have done what I have thought to be right for the country. I think that this project is right for the country.

We all know that our export market is in Europe, with more than 60 per cent. of our exports going there. Some purists would say that those are not exports and that we are all in one market—a home market. It is a colossal home market, but the fact is that more than 60 per cent.

of the exports which earn us our wealth cross the Channel by an inefficient means, relying on ship transport. I do not accept that relying on shipping alone is sufficient but I accept that a direct rail link from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, London——

Mr. Silkin: Aberdeen.

Mr. Crouch: Of course, I am talking of an electric rail link under the Channel to Paris, Brussels, Milan and Frankfurt. That is the way for this country to grow and, perhaps for the first time, to enjoy the benefits of being in the much larger market of 400 million people which is called the European Community.

This matter needs more consideration. We must not rush that. No one can accuse the Government of having rushed it, but perhaps there is something in Labour Members' statement, which they have advanced so consistently, that it would be better to have a public inquiry lasting a year or more. That is democracy at work. I believe that consultation with the public and the public's presentation of their views to Members of Parliament through a Select Committee are not bad ways in a modern system for people to have their voices heard right up to the very fount—the Minister. When parliamentarians report to the Minister, it is better than when an inspector reports.

Mr. Stuart Holland: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said earlier. But surely there is a mean between a public inquiry which may take a year and giving evidence by the local community in a day and a half. That is what is wrong and why the local community cannot be heard.

Mr. Crouch: The hon. Gentleman has reminded me of something that he said which I thought was perhaps the most telling thing said tonight. He said—and I must accept that this is right as no hon. Member contradicted him—that only a day and a half had been given for the consideration of the important question of what effect the project would have on the traffic environment in London. That is very important. Much more time should be given to that question. Heaven knows, it is difficult enough to do anything in a crowded city like London, and that point deserves a great deal of thought and consideration. I concede that point.

I criticise my hon. Friends and others, but perhaps I am being unfair. If I am, may I be unfair to all the British people? What has happened to the British people today? How different they are from what they were 150 years ago when Stephenson invented the railway. We built the railways in this and so many other countries in the world. We did not stumble or hesitate; we did it. We built the Severn tunnel and we did not stumble or hesitate. It took 14 days of explanation in Committee to get the Severn tunnel project through the House. Engineers argued their case and were heard in departmental Select Committees. So many Select Committees had to hear those cases 140 to 150 years ago. Last century Parliament was not only busy but brave and prepared to take decisions. We were not little Englanders in the 19th century. We were guilty of many other crimes and we created colossal industrial slums and degradation for part of our country as we developed our industrial revolution—we must not do that again—but we made decisions and got on with things. We became rich and great and the most powerful nation in the world because we had the courage in this House of Commons and Parliament to make decisions, and the British people were behind us.

It can be argued that the British people in those days did not enjoy the full franchise of parliamentary democracy as we enjoy it today, so decision making is slower now because we have to consult more people and take more time about it. However, whereas they were not frightened last century, we are frightened today. People are frightened and they complain.

What are we afraid of as we contemplate these great projects like the Channel tunnel—the biggest engineering project in the history of Europe? Are we afraid of competition? Are we afraid of being swamped by the French? We used not to be afraid of the French.

Mr. Silkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Crouch: Of course, but the right hon. Gentleman is interrupting a splendid flow.

Mr. Silkin: Was it not Lord Randolph Churchill who killed the Channel tunnel project in the 1880s?

Mr. Crouch: Yes, it was.

Mr. David Mitchell: My hon. Friend will recall that, while Lord Randolph Churchill condemned the project, his son supported it.

Mr. Crouch: Yes, it is very interesting. In fact, Lord Randolph Churchill's great grandson today tells me that his father-in-law was one of the fathers of the idea of the Channel tunnel, whereas his great grandfather, Lord Randolph Churchill, was one of those who opposed it. It is interesting to see how thinking develops within a family, let alone within a Parliament.

One of the worst things that can happen in making a speech is to be sidetracked into the glorious avenues of history. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Deptford for not going further up that avenue.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) said some nasty and unkind things earlier in his speech. Would he at least have the humility to accept that, just because a scheme is big and imaginative and attracts a lot of headlines and little coloured pamphlets, it is not necessarily sound or a sensible use of public money? Does he not realise that the British public are getting a little upset about schemes such as De Lorean and Concorde, which were big and imaginative but which wasted a lot of money which could have been better spent in other ways?

Mr. Crouch: I hope that my hon. Friend will not think that I am being unkind to him. I am performing in the House as he performs when he advances his views so strongly against our membership of the European Community. He is entitled to those views, just as I am entitled to mine.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: One must be humble.

Mr. Crouch: I will show as much humility as I can, and I will bear in mind my hon. Friend's stricture to do so.

Are the British people afraid of change? It is a terrible indictment if they are. If they are, then it is up to the House to give them the leadership and encouragement not to be afraid of change—or of Concorde. They must not be afraid of a great advance in aerospace technology. I accept that Concorde may not have been a great economic

[Mr. Crouch]

success because its research and development was paid for by the Government. However, it has broken through not just the sound barrier, but a barrier which shows that there is a future for supersonic aircraft for passenger travel. I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. Concorde did cost money, but successive Governments, supported by the French encouraged it.

Are we afraid of competition and change or are we afraid of the challenge of change and competition? It seems so to me at times. I can understand the people of Kent being opposed to the tunnel, because they tell me so. It will change a part of Kent considerably. It will change Folkestone — the Shepway constituency. It will change Cheriton, Newington and Peen dramatically. Perhaps Newington and Peen will disappear under the marshalling yards at the entrance to the tunnel. I am looking for my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) because the tunnel will also change Dover. It will change the traffic pattern to that town. Ashford will grow bigger and richer and more jobs will be created there. It will change Ramsgate. I believe that that port will grow in importance alongside the fixed link at Folkestone. I could be wrong. I believe that there is a need for an ancillary service to the continent by large economic ferry ships. However, the tunnel will not change my constituency of Canterbury, although people think it will. Two million tourists and pilgrims come to Canterbury every year, and they will still be coming, perhaps even more.

The tunnel will change the pattern in Kent. Most of it will be attracted to the M20 that will feed the tunnel. That will be better for Kent's environment. It will funnel the massive amount of traffic, domestic cars and lorries going to join the tunnel on to one road. It will be an advantage to have the traffic on one road rather than as at present spread across so many different roads to so many different ports in Kent. I can understand the people in east Kent being anxious and angry — they are angry — at the prospect of this change to their environment and the way they live today. Kent is an area for living or even retiring, not so much for earning a living. It is called the garden of England. It is a beautiful area. I live there myself and I shall go on living there even when the tunnel is built.

There may not be an advantage to the people who live around the tunnel entrance, at least not as they enjoy life today. Future generations may take a different view. Our children and grandchildren who will continue to live there may like the jobs and modern, high standard of living that will develop. Folkestone may not remain a retirement town; it may become a bustling, exciting link town with the continent.

Whatever the people of east Kent or Kent as a whole think, theirs is not the only voice to be heard in Britain on this massive decision. Some in the north-east, north-west, south Wales and Scotland, all of whom have spoken in the House, do not want the fixed link because, they say, it will make Kent prosperous at their expense — part of the golden triangle in the south-east. Others believe that Britain needs a fixed link as we now have the biggest, fastest growing export market in the world. The Government must take note of all those voices and strongly held views.

The Government must listen to my hon. Friends who disagree with the project because there is something in all the arguments. They must not be ignored, and their views must be taken into account. The Government and Parliament have a duty to heed them. That is why we need time. The Government must act in Britain's best interests, advance our economy, protect our environment and spread the work opportunity across the country. Those factors are all equally important. In the past 15 years the great industrial development in the North sea has been spread across our engineering bases in England and Scotland.

The Government have a duty to explain their case and to put forward the advantages in contrast with the disadvantages voiced so eloquently by others. They must be more eloquent in advising the public, particularly those who see disadvantages, of the genuine advantages of this fixed link. The Government have a duty to promise that they will protect the environment. That is what Kent needs above all and what it is so worried about. In all those matters I want the Government to have more time so that they can carry the great majority of the people with them on a great project of great advantage to the country.

10.37 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): In some ways it is appropriate that I follow the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), who referred to the old pilgrimage trail. The western half of my constituency is the ancient borough of Southwark. It was from Southwark to Canterbury and vice versa that pilgrims, first for matters spiritual and later for matters more mercenary, went down what is now the A2, which starts at London bridge and goes to Dover. Halfway through my constituency there is a sign to Dover and Folkestone, 72 miles away.

I have a small part of the London end of this project in my constituency, as the western edge of my constituency includes part of Waterloo. Although it is proper that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), who represents the northern third of Lambeth, speaks principally for that larger community, my constituents in the northern third of Southwark have as great an interest.

It was always clear that this Bill—unusual in nature, a hybrid Bill—with its Select Committee and Standing Committee, and its passage to the House of Lords, would be the subject of a motion such as this. The motion is not surprising given the debates that we had at the beginning of the current Session. The question which still remains to be answered — I remind the Minister that he has not answered the question put by my other parliamentary neighbour, the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) — is why this is not a Sessional Order as opposed to a Standing Order of the House. If the Government envisage that they will only need the forthcoming Session of Parliament to complete their procedural work, they only need an order covering that one Session. Something that is put into the Standing Orders, as the right hon. Member for Deptford said, remains part of the Standing Orders of the House until repealed. I should be interested to hear why the last clause is in the motion.

I welcome the fact that the motion recognises that it is not for the House collectively, or for the Government, to put pressure on the Select Committee. It is no secret that the Select Committee has been deliberating again today and, having completed its evidence only a matter of days ago, is likely to announce its conclusions tomorrow. It is right that the Committee should not be put under any further pressure. If, for any reason, the Committee is able

to announce only part of its conclusions and further work is needed, it is proper that it should be given that time. It is the procedures as opposed to the principles of the Bill that are my greatest concern as a Member representing the interests of my constituents as well as the interests of my party.

When legislation comes before the House, there is always a dilemma as to how the timetabling should work. It is regarded as a weapon of opposition that one can hold up Government business. The weapon of a Government with a sufficient majority is that they bring in a guillotine motion which is passed unless there is a sufficient internal rebellion. I hope that the Government, once the Select Committee has completed its task, will not try to railroad through the debates which will be necessary in the Standing Committee of this House or in the Committee of the other place.

It is right that proper debate takes place. It may be possible to agree on a timetable from the start of proceedings but that is the perennial question that arises when the first clauses are contemplated in detail but are followed by a rush of debate and a guillotine at the end. The way in which the interested parties will proceed depends upon adequate time being made available after the completion of the order and its passage.

I have two worries which I wish to express on behalf of my constituents who live just over Westminster bridge on the south bank—they are partly procedural and partly substantive. The Bill makes it clear that Waterloo will be the terminal in London. It is clear from the evidence that ten years ago Waterloo was not contemplated as the terminal in London,. When the predecessor to this Bill was before the House there were 10 suggested termini and Waterloo was not one of them.

It is not abundantly clear why Waterloo should be the terminus. Clearly there are two Southern region stations of substance — Victoria and Waterloo. One might include Blackfriars, which has a claim, or London Bridge. A terminus was suggested at King's Cross using the Snow Hill link. A terminus at docklands was also suggested.

Why has British Rail not been asked to put its case? Why was the consideration of Waterloo as the terminus to cope with such a massive influx of people specifically excluded from the Select Committee's deliberations? That Committee worked as hard as anybody could have asked any Select Committee to work. The hon. Member for Vauxhall is right. We are talking about 20 million people, not 6 million — phenomenal crowds. As the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) said, we have had difficulties enough coping with crowds on the accesses to the Channel ports for centuries. To allow a massive new influx without permitting any argument is unacceptable.

We must have something from the Minister tonight to put at rest the valid fears of communities which inevitably are always under threat in the intense metropolitan life of an inner city, particularly in the capital. He knows about development sites. He has seen the pressures and the efforts being made to hold communities together because of the incursion of office blocks and traffic. He knows the projections for vehicular traffic up to the end of the century. He knows the practical difficulties that already exist.

We are always complaining about buses and coaches parked on Westminster bridge and about colleagues being delayed access to the House for Divisions because of traffic congestion. There is regular trouble on the other side of the river—not only at rush hours—outside the Department of Education and Science, along York road, around Waterloo station, along Waterloo road and Westminster bridge road, and along the Embankment to Vauxhall cross, which is a major and congested intersection.

It is imperative that fears about traffic flows and traffic management are allayed properly by proper investigation and inquiry. It is not sufficient to say that there will be no opportunity for the problems to be explored. If the problems were not attached to the Channel Tunnel Bill, they would be the subject of a public inquiry. If we cannot have a public inquiry—I accept the outcome of the debate — we must do something to ensure that the problems are examined.

The London evidence took only two and a half days in the Select Committee last month. The development of a terminus for international rail traffic in London merits much more than that. We must have some assurance that the Government will allow the arguments to be expressed.

The major anxiety is traffic — the handling of passenger traffic, the ancillary traffic and the works in the schedule. There is a knock-on—perhaps knockdown—concern about what will happen as a result of the development. I think of housing implications, social services and accommodation. Housing, and the space to go with it, is immensely important.

I do not underestimate the importance of the problems worrying people in the Kent villages and on the coast. Communities are at stake in both places. The Minister must know from the record number of petitions and petitioners that communities at both ends are unhappy.

The Government have one more year in which to remedy that unhappiness. I do not want to argue about whether the project will go ahead or whether the City will come up with the money—that is for other people and other places. But the Bill has several stages yet, here and in another place. The Minister must try to find mechanisms so that those who have been prevented from asking questions and having them answered, about transport primarily, but also about housing, open space and land and other community issues, are given the opportunity to put their case.

I am, above all, like every other hon. Member, sent here to represent my constituents. The way in which, and the ease and co-operation with which, the Government will be assisted in the remaining stages of the Bill depend on the Minister giving a sympathetic and positive response to the anxieties, strongly put by my neighbours on both sides, irrespective of political difference and shared by people who have equal community concerns in Kent. I hope that the Minister will be positive.

10.50 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) made an all too typically Liberal speech, elaborately sitting on the fence and refusing to come down on either side. He reminded me of the statement, "These are my principles and if you do not like them I have some others which may suit you better."

Having said that, I am bound to say that the hon. Gentleman, like the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), raised important points regarding the London part of this business. I am rather persuaded by what both said that these matters have not received the consideration

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

that they deserve. It is no argument against the motion but I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will have taken on board the genuine anxiety felt on both sides of the House that these matters require careful consideration.

I intend to be brief. I shall be a great deal briefer than my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) and I shall be a great deal less charitable than he was about the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). I am sorry to see that he is not in the Chamber and if I waffle for a minute or two he may return. I intend to criticise severely the unworthy and distasteful speech that he made in opening the debate from the Back Benches this evening.

No doubt the speech will get the publicity that it deserves. That is to say, it will get the headlines in *The Sun*. But this is a responsible legislative Chamber and I ask all hon. Members, whether they are for the project or against it, what conveivable useful purpose is served by trying to whip up hatred against our allies and our French partners. I am glad to see that my hon. Friend has returned to the Chamber because I can now repeat what I have said, which was that I found his speech unworthy and distasteful.

Mr. Aitken: I would not have expected anything less of my hon. Friend.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I am glad to have fulfilled my hon. Friend's expectations.

What conceivable useful purpose is served in trying to whip up hatred against the French? We have to work with them. They are our partners in the European Community. If we fall out, things will go badly for both of us.

Mr. Aitken: What about Syria?

Sir Anthony Meyer: There my hon. Friend goes again, spreading stories, which turn out to be untrue, that the French are about to embark on a great arms deal with Syria.

The Eurotunnel project, which of course raises doubts and anxieties, will bring great benefits to both our countries, as well as to a great many other countries besides, unless we fall to squabbling about which of the two will derive the greater share of the benefit. There is a doctrine which seems to be alien to the thinking of my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and others who think like him, and that is the idea that the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts. If both sides work together on a project, the total good that can be achieved for both of them can be greater than what each of them puts into it.

I should like to make one contribution to the argument about which side derives the greater benefit. This tunnel will extend the continental railway system by some 400 miles, but it will extend the British railway system by 1,500 miles or more. My constituency depends very much on the continued viability of the British railway system. Like a great many people in peripheral areas, my constituents readily accept the argument that the construction of this tunnel will do almost more than anything else to put British Rail on a viable course. Because my constituents depend to a large extent on British Rail for their continued prosperity, this project is undoubtedly good news for them.

There is an uncovenanted benefit from this project, although it is one upon which I do not want to dwell. It is that British rolling stock will be able to travel freely all over the continental rail system, but continental rolling stock will find considerable difficulty in negotiating our tighter curves, closer lines and smaller tunnels. By cheating, we seem in that case to be making a net gain.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South made the worst of a bad case, especially when he alleged that the Eurotunnel promoters were having great difficulty in raising the money. He is evidently disappointed that they have succeeded in raising the money that they set out to raise. But it would not be surprising if there were difficulties in raising money, because people who put up money for such a project are not to know that my hon. Friend and those who think like him are an insignificant minority in the House, as will be evident in the vote. For all that prospective investors know, 600 hon. Members may think like my hon. Friend and prefer to dwell on the difficulties, the obstacles, the disadvantages and the drawbacks, and think that Britain will be the loser, that we will be taken for a ride and that we are the suckers in all this.

It is a miracle that any measure can get through the parliamentary labyrinth nowadays. If one combines the parliamentary obstacles that have always existed with the growing national worship of failure, exemplified in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, it is amazing that anything is ever done in Britain. The order that we are debating is an ingredient in enabling such a miracle to be brought about, and I have no hesitation in supporting it.

10.58 pm

Dr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The anxieties of my constituents have been expressed in hundreds of words to the Select Committee, and I should like to pay tribute, if not to what the Committee is likely to say in its report — I cannot prejudge that — to the Committee for the way in which it has received those words of my constituents. Apart from the more esoteric concerns, the anxieties in north-east Kent boil down to a couple of simple issues. My constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) live behind the tunnel door. They see the prospect of a fixed link not as a job creator, but as the north-east Kent bypass.

My constituents are surrounded by a poor road infrastructure and they see the French Government pouring money into the infrastructure in the Pas de Calais. They have no incentive to offer like the incentive offered by the French in the Pas de Calais. Until fairly recently they had no cause to believe that their worries were not well justified. During the summer recess my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport and the Under-Secretary of State for Employment with responsibility for tourism and more recently my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry visited north-east Kent. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry in an interview with the *Thanet Extra*, one of our local papers, said that

"he was convinced that better roads into the area were necessary before assistance could be given."

In the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* he is reported as saying:

"Firms are unlikely to invest in Thanet unless road and rail links are improved because at the moment lorries cannot get in and out."

My hon. Friend the Minister of State is right.

My hon. Friend kindly visited Thanet early on Sunday, and I place on record my thanks, and those of my constituents, for the courtesy and sympathy with which he viewed our problems. I would not wish to suggest that the Thanet way is the modern equivalent of the road to Damascus, but anyone who travels in the middle of the road over Roman Galley hill comes perilously close to his maker. My hon. Friend was kind enough to acknowledge upon his departure that he had learnt a great deal from his visit.

As a result of my hon. Friend's visit, Kent county council has submitted a three-phase plan for the improvement of the entire Thanet way. It has also submitted an application for Government support. I would like to hope and believe that that support might be forthcoming. I would like also to hope that Thanet's claims for intermediate status, or the establishment of an enterprise zone, might be heeded. If we are to realise the potential of north-east Kent, there must be a concerted effort by the Departments of Transport, Employment, the Environment and Trade and Industry, together with the Kent county council. That will be necessary with or without the prospect of a fixed link.

The port of Ramsgate, which employs many of my constituents, has deposited exciting plans for its development and I hope and believe that it can succeed. The operators of what is becoming known as Kent international airport at Manston have exciting plans as well, and I believe that they can succeed. We can attract industry and I believe that we can compete with the French, but if we are to do so it must be on equal terms.

Only today I attended the launch of a major computer and electronics initiative. The research and development for the project has been carried out in my constituency. The manufacturing that will follow will be located — where? Will it be in Thanet, Kent or northern France? There is a major — I hesitate to say "national" — company that next month will be holding a reception at the Ritz hotel, to which 100 bankers have been invited. This has been done to attract investment in industrial development. Is this development to take place in Kent or in England? The answer is no. It is to take place in northern France. It is recognised that the attractions and facilities in northern France are better than those provided in the United Kingdom.

It may surprise my Whips and some of my colleagues when I say that I shall support the carry-over motion. That is not because I have become converted suddenly to the attractions of the Channel tunnel. I shall do so because the House demonstrated on Second Reading its wish that the debate should continue. I believe that there is a great deal more to be said and that there may be a great deal more to oppose. I would like to think that we can make progress in this matter and I shall support the motion.

11.4 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I may surprise the Government Whips and some of my hon. Friends when I say that, although I am an opponent of the project, I shall support the carry-over motion. It is essentially a procedural matter, but that does not minimise its importance. If the House passes a carry-over motion, it is according a privilege to the promoters of a Bill that should only rarely be granted. I shall demonstrate that by suggesting to all my hon. Friends how horrified they would be if the Government were to bring forward straightforward Government legislation and suggest that that should be carried over.

There would be horror at such a constitutional outrage, because the ability to ensure that legislation is dropped at the end of a parliamentary year is the fundamental strength not just of the Opposition but of Parliament over the Excutive. Therefore, the carry-over provision is remarkable. The House rightly recognises that we have to give the promoters of private legislation that right to carry-over; otherwise there would be gross injustice to those who had expended a great deal of time and money in a quasi-judicial manner in bringing their case before the House.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I know that it is the accepted doctrine, but does my hon. Friend really think that it is such a valuable ingredient in the preservation of democracy that uncompleted legislation should fall at the end of every Session? It is rather akin to the Treasury being unable to think for more than one year at a time.

Mr. Moate: That is a matter of great debate. I should have thought that the vast majority of the House would agree that to remove that power of Parliament over the Executive would deliver such power to the Executive that parliamentarians would simply become mere rubber stamps. Let us not proceed down that line. My answer is that the power to stop legislation is our greatest strength. Therefore, we are according a remarkable privilege, and one that should be given only for private legislation.

We should think carefully about hybrid Bills, which is what we have here, with major Government legislation as part of it. We are allowing highly controversial legislation to be carried over to a new Session. In this case, we must do so because the promoters have been led down that path and it would be unjust of Parliament not to allow the case to continue to be put. In no way should we fail to understand the importance of what we are doing; nor should we do it lightly.

However, I must express my dissatisfaction with the hybrid procedure for a proposition of this nature. Some valuable points have been made, for example, about the Waterloo terminus. We must put it on record that consideration of the London terminus or termini of the Channel tunnel project is an integral part of the proceedings. It is fundamentally wrong that consideration of that terminus is not part of the whole procedure, and being examined in depth by whatever body is deemed appropriate to consider it. Nobody, even the strong supporters of the Bill, pretended that that consideration has been made.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) drew attention to this point, and then said rather sadly that, because we did not get a public inquiry to consider this matter, he would watch carefully the Government proposals during the coming months. However, his party voted against a public inquiry, so he is trying to have his cake and eat it when he worries about the absence of an inquiry against which he and his party voted.

Mr. Simon Hughes: There are two issues. The first is whether there should have been a public inquiry at the beginning, and the Government made it clear that they would not have one, and the matter was fought and lost some time ago. The second was whether there should be an inquiry into whether the terminus in London should be

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Waterloo or some other station. My argument was that given that it was clear that this was just a subsection within a clause, and there was not to be a public inquiry into it, there should be far more than two and a half days on limited selective questioning as to whether that was the appropriate formula, excluding asking British Rail to justify its position.

Mr. Moate: The hon. Gentleman said, "The matter was fought and lost some time ago," as though it were a matter of regret, when I presume that he was glad that the battle for a public inquiry was lost because he voted against a public inquiry. We now have to find out from him and his party what they expect by way of public inquiry into this one question.

It is regrettable that the Select Committee, for all its tremendous efforts, has excluded matters that are of fundamental concern, particularly safety, finance and fair compeitition. Other hon. Members have referred to fair competition. I fully accept that my right hon. and hon. Friends will endeavour to build into the project the requirement that there will be fair competition between the ferries and the tunnel. However, legislation now is unlikely to be effective a decade from now if a tunnel is built. It will be even less effective if French or overseas interests end up with a dominant financial interest in the tunnel. The ferries against which they will be competing will be British ferries.

It will be very hard to ensure that the Channel tunnel does not adopt a policy of predatory pricing against ferry operators if at that time the British financial interest in the tunnel is a minority interest. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say just how we shall be able to ensure that the Channel tunnel operators do not adopt a predatory pricing policy against the remaining ferries. That is not a small matter. If all ferry operations were to come to an end, with all the consequent implications for defence, our maritime tradition and seafaring interests, I suspect that the vast majority of right hon. and hon. Members and the electorate would be against the Channel tunnel project. We are entitled to far greater assurances from the Government on this point.

Without launching into any of the points that were made at some length by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), there is immense concern in our county about the environmental impact and damage to commercial interests and to our ports. It has nothing whatever to do with whether or not one was for or against entry into the EEC. To my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury and for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) it is a romantic dream. They are welcome to it. That is fine. But to others the Channel tunnel is a transport communications system which has to be judged in the light of its impact upon our environment and our commercial interests. My hon. Friends do no justice to the argument by introducing fairly ancient arguments about the EEC.

Furthermore, construction of the tunnel is not necessarily an exciting and imaginative technological challenge to everybody. We have gone beyond that. Already we have highly efficient, varied, fast and economic transport links with the Community. I resent my hon. Friend's allegation that we are "little Englanders." This island has great maritime links with the continent of Europe and with the rest of the world. Being an island has made this country more outward looking than any other nation. My hon. Friend wants to substitute one rolling motorway for a whole range of transport links with Europe. If he finds that exciting, so be it, but it is not right for him to level the charge at other people that because they are against that particular engineering project they are small-minded or "little Englanders." We can be very proud of our maritime links. They are highly developed and highly sophisticated and they are of immense value to this country.

I believe that this is a bad Bill. It will be environmentally damaging to our county and it will not be good for Britain. It is right that the promoters should be allowed to put their case fully, but they should put it in accordance with the traditions and procedures of this House. It should not be done lightly and it should be done now, but in a fairly relaxed manner. This Bill should be allowed to be further examined. Judging by all the historic references to past failures, this tunnel will never be built in our lifetime. During the forthcoming Session of Parliament, I think that the Bill will stumble at one of the many further hurdles that it has yet to encounter.

Mr. David Mitchell: I find myself in happy agreement with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), who opened the debate for the Opposition by expressing appreciation for the work of the Select Committee. The House owes a considerable debt to the Chairman and the members of the Select Committee for the tremendous amount of work that they put in. Quite uniquely in the history of Select Committees, the Committee Members went to Kent to meet the local people and see on the ground what was going on. The House will want to put that fact on record.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North referred to the assertion that it would have been better to have a public inquiry. A public inquiry would involve an inspector, appointed by the Secretary of State, hearing the evidence, not in a wholly dissimilar way from the way in which the Select Committee heard the evidence before it. The inspector would then make his report in private to the Secretary of State, who, in private, would make his decision, against which there would be no appeal, and then publish the inspector's report together with his own decision.

I should have thought that, on a matter of such unique national importance as the Channel tunnel, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North would take the view that it required something more than a Secretary of State taking the ultimate decision, behind closed doors, as to whether the planning of this tunnel should go ahead. That is why the Select Committee procedure, with the Committee sitting in public and making its report public, is a more democratic one. The highest tribunal of the land can take the decision. The hon. Gentleman can take another view, but I am putting forward mine.

Mr. Robert Hughes: As the Minister takes such a view of the highly democratic nature of our Parliament and the need for Members of Parliament to make up their own minds, will he guarantee that when the Bill is again considered by the House—if the motion is passed—there will be no Government Whips operating?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman will be aware—he need have no hesitation or doubt about this—that in this matter the Whips will not be of signal importance. My

hon. Friends who are not in favour of the Channel Tunnel Bill will vote against it, Whips or no Whips. The hon. Gentleman can take that assurance.

The next point raised by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North concerned the need for inland clearance depots linked to British Rail. I agree that at the moment there are rail-served inland clearance depots at Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Stratford, London. He is right. This is something to which we should pay close attention. I recently asked for further information about the best location for British Rail's linkage with various parts of the country. As the hon. Gentleman may know, Sheffield has been taking a special interest in the possibility of establishing a new inland clearance depot with that in mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) sought to make a funeral oration over the Channel tunnel. Mark Twain's response seems particularly appropriate:

"The report of my death was an exaggeration."

My hon. Friend went on to assert that only £206 million had been raised out of £5,000 million required, and that this was only 4 per cent. of the money. My hon. Friend has got it wrong. The promoters are not seeking that amount of equity. The vast majority of that sum will be in the form of loans for which contact has already been made. Twenty five per cent of the equity has already been raised. It is remarkable that that amount has been raised before the Bill has gone through the House, before the legislation has gone through the French Parliament, before the treaty has been ratified and before the concession agreement has come into effect and subjected to an unparalleled campaign of substantial distortion by the opponents of the proposal. On that basis, it is remarkable that the equity raising has been so successful.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South said that the project had been saved, but asked for whose benefit. He went on to say that the winners would be the few investors in Eurotunnel who stand to make a fortune. My hon. Friend is apparently suffering from schizophrenia because a little later he went on to say that the project was a south sea bubble and that no profits would be made from it. His schizophrenia showed itself again when he talked about the French investing in the tunnel and it being a French tunnel. The last time we debated this issue my hon. Friend tried to persuade us that the French would withdraw their support. He now alleges that it is a profitable operation in which they wish to invest. He should be careful not to contradict himself too often.

My hon. Friend spoke of the garden of England going grey under concrete. In any case, whatever happens, the traffic going through the east Kent area—whether it is Channel tunnel or port—will double by the end of the century and we will have to provide massive additional road infrastructure for that purpose. That is where the largest part of the concrete to which my hon. Friend referred will be.

Because this is a rail link tunnel, British Rail expects that it will take no fewer than 1,000 38-tonne lorries a day off the Kent roads. The environmentalists and my hon. Friend, if he wishes to be unbiased in these matters, can take some satisfaction from that.

My hon. Friend referred to taxpayers' money for British Rail. I assure him that the money for BR in this project is wholly commercial. There will be no extension of the public service obligation and the taxpayers' contribution to BR in respect of financing its work for the Channel tunnel. About £390 million of expenditure is to be incurred at 1985 prices, which will provide a useful number of jobs, but it will be commercial money. It will not come from the taxpayer. The project will be fully viable in its own right.

My hon. Friend asked what gains there would be and said that there would not be gains in jobs. It is certain that not only will there be gains in jobs—about 10,000 a year on average over the next seven years during construction of the tunnel — but that once it is completed, as my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) and for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) said, exporters and industrialists in the far north will be able to get their goods delivered to the markets of Europe. Sixty per cent. of our exports go to Europe. We shall be able to get delivery of those goods to the markets within 24 hours with a reliability, speed and low cost which cannot apply today. In doing so, we will ensure that jobs will be more secure in the north of the country than they are now, with the present disadvantages.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) drew attention to the opportunities for BR to exploit our geographical position. He was right. With his long experience of sea matters, he will be familiar with the development of the vast international container ships going one way around the world which seek one, and only one, stop in Europe. The map shows that one stop in the United Kingdom with a Channel tunnel will provide them with the best, most economic way of getting their containers into the European market.

The right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) asked me to confirm the correctness of my earlier assertion that, if the Bill is required to go through a further Session, there must be a further carry-forward motion. I can assure him on that score. What I said at the beginning was correct.

Mr. Silkin: That was not the assurance for which I asked. The assurance I requested was that, if the Bill becomes stuck in the next Session, it will not be carried forward into the Session after that. The hon. Gentleman did not deal with the point that I made about the Standing Order. On the contrary, he has now confirmed that, in the Government's view, it will run from Session to Session.

Mr. Mitchell: Let us be absolutely clear. Tonight we are ensuring that the Bill goes forward, later this month, to the new Session of Parliament. We are not ensuring that it would automatically be carried on the basis of the motion tonight into any future Session of Parliament, either because of a general election intervening, or because of the end of that Session of Parliament.

Mr. Silkin: Will the Minister make this absolutely clear? Can the Government give the assurance that if the Bill fails in the next Session that will be the end and it will have to start the process all over again? I want that assurance, because that was what the hon. Gentleman was trying to tell me—that there would be no carry forward from next Session to the Session after that.

Mr. Mitchell: Of course I am not going to give the right hon. Gentleman that assurance; nor would he expect me to do that. He knows perfectly well that the Bill has Government support. If, for any reason that I cannot imagine, it was still around at the end of the next Session,

[Mr. Mitchell]

or if a general election were to intervene, of course I would expect to see the Bill brought up again and carried forward into the ensuing Session.

The right hon. Member for Deptford gave us a very interesting dissertation on Ramsay MacDonald and the 1931 precedent. He suggested that tonight was a major parliamentary event.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Oh, come off it.

Mr. Mitchell: The right hon. Gentleman did suggest that this was a major parliamentary event. He drew attention to the fact that Ramsay MacDonald had moved a similar motion in respect of London Transport in 1931. It has now become common practice for hybrid Bills to be treated in this way, and that is acknowledged in "Erskine May".

The right hon. Gentleman went on to say that this was not the right thing to spend "our money on." I wrote those words down as he used them. It is not spending "our money." I wish that the right hon. Gentleman would recall that the project is completely privately financed. "Our money" is not being put into it, and that is one of the big advantages. The risks are being taken by the investors and not by the taxpayers.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) raised a number of important points. He expressed anxiety over the uncertainty that his constituents face, especially in the way of blight. That is a very good reason why the House should see the project through and come to a decision in the ensuing Session of Parliament as quickly as possible. I can give my right hon. and learned Friend the assurances that he sought about competition, and I can add that the Government have agreed to bring forward a clause in Standing Committee that will prohibit the Government from providing funds or guarantees to Eurotunnel. I hope that that will remove some of my right hon. and learned Friend's anxieties.

My right hon. and learned Friend also raised the question of the A20 and stated how important the road is to his constituents. I know that it is important for relieving congestion, for reducing accidents and for providing relief for Capel le Ferne. However, my right hon. and learned Friend will know, and the House will want to know, that we must seek the views of the Select Committee. Like my right hon. and learned Friend, I shall be watching with great interest to see what the Select Committee has to say on that subject.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) spoke about the sole use of Waterloo as an outlet for the Channel tunnel. I draw his attention to the fact that it is British Rail's intention to run services to Waterloo and through Olympia to the northern parts of the country. One would be able to get a train from Glasgow, Manchester or Birmingham and pass through Olympia. Waterloo will not have the sole concentration of traffic. Having said that, in answer to the worries that the hon. Gentleman expressed, I must tell him that the number of trains that enter Waterloo daily is legion. In the project we are talking about four trains an hour. We should have some sense of proportion about this, rather than assume that 500,000 people a day will pour through the place so that one would not be able to move for the resulting congestion.

Mr. Stuart Holland: The Minister is well aware that it is not just four trains an hour, but four trains of exceptional length, each equivalent to two trains. In addition, it is four trains in and out. Will he answer the traffic flow figures that have been given which suggest that they are equivalent to Gatwick? In reality, Lambeth—for example—has no elevation, no study of the plans for a terminal to absorb that sort of traffic.

Will the Minister also address the question of the social criteria and the impact on land use values? Unfortunately, the Minister's committee would not accept those criteria, and no one else seems to be considering them. That is one reason why the community groups withdrew from the committee.

Mr. Mitchell: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's last point in a moment. He expressed some outrage that there was no evidence from British Rail before the committee. The committee had the power to require British Rail to give it whatever evidence it required. If it decided that it did not require further evidence, so be it.

In respect of the number of passengers, British Rail must plan its terminal not on annual figures but on peak flows, based on the number of trains arriving and leaving in any hour, and with the expectation that at certain points in the year those trains will be nearly full. That is what British Rail's consultants, Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, have done. They have assumed four full trains inwards and four full trains outwards an hour, which is the most that the railway network between the tunnel and London can accommodate. That would provide 6,000 additional passengers in the hour moving through Waterloo. The consultants examined how they could be handled by the road system and the Underground, and concluded that there was adequate capacity on both. Indeed, with an altered road layout within the station, the road conditions on surrounding roads during peak periods in 2003 will be no worse than at present.

The hon. Gentleman raised a point about the joint consultation committee. That was an opportunity to expose, with the representatives of British Rail standing in front of the committee, all the figures, facts and information. I deeply regret that, for very narrow reasons, the representatives of the Lambeth area walked out of that meeting. Other councils were able to extract a great deal of useful information from British Rail.

It reflects ill on the hon. Gentleman that, having encouraged me to set up the committee, his local representatives should walk out and then complain later that they did not obtain the information that they wanted.

Mr. Stuart Holland: The Minister is well aware that they are not my local representatives—*[Interruption.]* No, no, no—the House should get this clear. We are not talking about Lambeth council and its representation; we are talking about local community groups. The local community group decided that as the question of the social impact of the Channel tunnel traffic would not be taken into account by the committee, and that it would be solely a matter of the traffic implications, they could not co-operate with the committee. These questions will not be answered at all. Gibbs has not answered them. There will be the equivalent of 16 trains an hour, with Gatwick-like traffic, going through a terminal building about the size of this Chamber. It is quite absurd.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman should know—and I am sorry that he does not—that the reason why Lambeth representatives walked out had nothing to do with the explanation that he has just given. It was because they wanted the meetings held in public so that they could turn it into a public meeting rather than one in which elected representatives could discuss issues—rather as the elected representatives in Kent discussed them and as a result secured a number of changes.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of a report in the *New Civil Engineer* and asked whether it was true that British Rail was planning secretly to build a new line to the east of Sevenoaks. He asked me to deny that. The hon. Gentleman might be interested in the anatomy of a rumour. Some months ago British Rail asked some younger members of staff to work out every single, conceivable option—there were 50 of them, and this was one. Forty-nine were rejected, and this is one that was rejected as not being a potential runner. How the magazine got hold of that one and picked it up rather than the other 49 I would not know, but it was on that basis that the article rested. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that there is no truth in the rumour and that there is no reason to place any reliance on it.

Mr. Stuart Holland: Is the Minister saying that the proposal will never be put to the Government and will never be accepted by them for such traffic, despite its major implications for the scheme?

Mr. Mitchell: I have just explained the antecedents of the rumour. As BR rejected it, and as I can handle only propositions that come to me from BR, no such proposition is on the table.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I asked two questions about Waterloo. Is the fact that the Select Committee decided not to hear BR the end of the matter? Will there be a private Bill for the terminal at Waterloo, or will there be a public inquiry?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sorry if I omitted to answer those questions. No, there will not be a further Bill. That matter is contained in this measure, and as the relevant schedules will come before the Standing Committee there will be further opportunity for debate then.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury courageously put a view which not all his constituents share. I have been in Canterbury three times in the last month and almost every one of the younger people I met in the city was wholly in favour of the scheme. History will judge my hon. Friend well for the stand that he is taking.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) raised a number of points. He said that the Select Committee should not be hurried. That is the purpose of this motion, which provides two options. One deals with the possibility of the Select Committee completing its work in time, while the other does not. The whole of the worry that the hon. Gentleman expressed has been fully catered for.

The hon. Gentleman asked why Waterloo and not Victoria? The platforms at Victoria are not long enough and the amount of property that would have to be demolished would be considerable. He then asked why not Blackfriars. The platforms there are not long enough and could not be made long enough. Why not London Bridge, he asked. The curve of the line there would not allow trains of this length to be handled properly. I have already answered his question about whether there will be more opportunity for debate. As I explained, the schedules will provide that opportunity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West was also uneasy about the Waterloo situation. I have explained the opportunity that was given to the representatives of the people of Waterloo and Lambeth and how they walked out on that opportunity, so they can hardly grumble about a lack of such opportunity.

Hon. Members also drew attention to one of the most important factors arising out of the Channel tunnel, and that is its effect on BR and the opportunity for BR to be linked into the whole of the European rail network. I profoundly believe that the opportunities that that will provide for our exporters—in north Wales, Glasgow and the north of the country—to be able to compete on equal terms with others who have land frontiers with the major countries of Europe will prove in the long run to be one of the most lasting beneficial effects to flow from the Channel tunnel.

Whether hon. Members support or oppose the Channel tunnel, I believe that none of us would want to put all the petitioners to the trouble and expense of re-representing their views to a new Select Committee, so I hope that the whole House will approve the carry forward proposal. An expert on procedure told me that the subject of a carry-over motion of this sort on a private or hybrid Bill could be said to be twofold—to make petitioners less poor than they otherwise would be, and lawyers less rich than they otherwise would be. I commend it to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 174, Noes 73.

Division No. 307] **[11.40 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Chope, Christopher
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Amess, David	Cockeram, Eric
Ancram, Michael	Conway, Derek
Arnold, Tom	Coombs, Simon
Ashby, David	Cope, John
Ashdown, Paddy	Couchman, James
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Cranborne, Viscount
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Crouch, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Dorrell, Stephen
Baldry, Tony	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Batiste, Spencer	Dover, Den
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Durant, Tony
Bellingham, Henry	Dykes, Hugh
Benyon, William	Evennett, David
Bevan, David Gilroy	Fairbairn, Nicholas
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Fallon, Michael
Blackburn, John	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Forth, Eric
Bottomley, Peter	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Gale, Roger
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Bright, Graham	Gregory, Conal
Brinton, Tim	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Brooke, Hon Peter	Hampson, Dr Keith
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Harris, David
Buck, Sir Antony	Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Budgen, Nick	Hickmet, Richard
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam	Hind, Kenneth
Butterfill, John	Hirst, Michael
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*	Hordern, Sir Peter
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Cash, William	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda	King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Chapman, Sydney	Lang, Ian

Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

NOES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Allen Adams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That, when the Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill reports the Bill to the House, further proceedings on the Bill shall be suspended until the next Session of Parliament.

Ordered,

That if a Bill is presented in the next Session in the same terms as those in which the Channel Tunnel Bill stood when proceedings thereon were suspended in this Session—

(a) the Bill shall be ordered to be printed and shall be deemed to have been read the first and second time;

(b) if the Committee has reported that it has gone through the Bill, the Bill shall be deemed to have been reported from a Select Committee;

(c) if the Committee has reported that it has not completed its consideration of the Bill—

(i) the Bill shall stand committed to a Select Committee of the same Members as the Members of the Committee in this Session;

(ii) all Petitions presented in this Session which stand referred to the Committee and which have not been withdrawn shall stand referred to the Committee in the next Session;

(iii) any minutes of evidence taken and any papers laid before the Committee in this Session which have been reported to the House shall stand referred to the Committee in the next Session;

(iv) the Instruction [17th July] shall be an Instruction to the Committee;

(v) only those Petitions mentioned in sub-paragraph (ii) above, and any Petition which may be presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the Committee in the next Session, shall stand referred to the Committee;

(vi) any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Committee in the next Session shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition;

(vii) the Committee shall have power to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom, and to report from day to day the Minutes of Evidence taken before it;

(viii) three shall be the Quorum of the Committee;

(ix) any person registered in this Session as a parliamentary agent entitled to practice as such in opposing Bills only who, at the time when proceedings on the Bill were suspended in this Session, was employed in opposing the Bill shall be deemed to have been registered as such a parliamentary agent in the next Session;

(d) the Standing Orders and practice of the House applicable to the Bill, so far as complied with or (in the case of the Standing Orders relating to Private Business) dispensed with in this Session, shall be deemed to have been complied with or (as the case may be) dispensed with in the next Session; and

(e) if the Bill is reported, or is deemed by virtue of paragraph *(b)* above to have been reported, from a Select Committee in the next Session, it shall thereupon stand re-committed to a Standing Committee.

Ordered,

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

PETITIONS

Jarrow Crusade

11.50 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by more than 2,700 people from the Sheffield area protesting about the level of unemployment and its effect upon the young.

I pay tribute to the marchers who accompanied the Jarrow march from Sheffield to London to present this petition not just to me but to my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard), and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

Since 1979 Sheffield has passed through a difficult period. We need the House to recognise the plight of our people in Sheffield. The petition states:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House does urge Her Majesty's Government that the necessary action be taken, and the necessary active assistance given to remedy the wrongs at present being inflicted on Sheffield.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

11.52 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by 7,500 constituents who reside in the Barnsley metropolitan district, represented in the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) and myself. It is for the convenience of the House that I present the petition.

The petition is the result of the Jarrow crusade 1986. We had the honour and privilege of being with the marchers during their short stay in Barnsley. It is a crusade of people — young and not so young — who have marched yet again, after the last Jarrow crusade, to bring to the attention of the nation the plight of the unemployed —more than 21 per cent. in the Barnsley metropolitan district. That represents more than 18,500 people, including hundreds of young people who have never seen real permanent employment. The area has 1,400 school leavers embarking upon a career of unemployment.

Based on the Government's regional assessment submitted to the European Community, the area will be one of continuous decline. That is the pattern if the Government continue in office.

Two of our young constituents joined the crusade at Barnsley and they helped to present the petition outside the House this morning. They were chosen as representatives of the members of the Barnsley Centre Against Unemployment. They are Tracey Devenport and Dean Kenyon. For over three years they have sought employment day in, day out. As they walked south they saw how unemployment became less pronounced and prosperity more evident.

They rightly ask why that is. Why is the nation so divided? What is the House doing about it and how long will it take to get rid of the problem? That is why the petitioners

pray that your honourable House urges that necessary active assistance be given by the Government for the provision of work in the area of Barnsley metropolitan district.

This is a great credit to all who took part in the crusade.

[Mr. Allen McKay]

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.
To lie upon the Table.

11.55 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 5,000 people in the Wakefield metropolitan district area, covering Wakefield, Hemsworth, Pontefract and Castleford, and Normanton. The 5,000 people have signed a petition asking the Government to take action to arrest the industrial dereliction in the area. The petition talks of seven years of dereliction and industrial depression which has never been paralleled in the history of the area. We ask that the Government take note of the petition.

Young people marched the full length of the country to bring to the Government's notice the need to generate employment in the north of England and throughout the country. We share their plea that the Government should allow employment to be developed in areas with extensive unemployment.

I present the petition on behalf of colleagues who represent the Wakefield metropolitan area.

I beg leave to present the petition.
To lie upon the Table.

11.57 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of many thousands of my constituents.

I recall the 1936 Jarrow crusade as a seven-year-old child. Little did I know that 50 years later I would be presenting a petition about unemployment in the town in which I was born and bred.

The petition states:

for seven years Jarrow has endured industrial depression without parallel in the town's history.

We have lost many jobs. The whole of the shipbuilding industry on the south side of the Tyne has been obliterated by this Government's policies. Ten unemployed constituents, Ken Smith, Wayne Scott, Paul Loft, Lawrence Maloy, David Melia, Billy Orr, John Badger, Harry Thorn, Paul Thomas and Stephen Byrne, carried the petition in the original box which held the petition in 1936.

I beg leave to present the petition.
To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that to have petitions read at this time of the day the House officials are notified. Other similar petitions will follow. Perhaps you will draw to the notice of those responsible that the Paymaster General, the Minister responsible for unemployment, has not had the decency to turn up for the presentation of the petitions. He was prepared to turn up earlier today when we were discussing availability for work. The Paymaster General himself is not available for work. He is treating the people who have walked 300 miles with nothing less then contempt.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The shadow spokesman for employment is not here either.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Whether Ministers are present or not is not a matter for the Chair.

Housing (Basildon)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.59 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Ironically, the very success of Basildon in promoting itself as an attractive new town has largely contributed to the present pressures on our housing stock. Basildon has everything going for it at the moment — good community facilities, excellent communications, particularly now with the completion of the final part of the M25, increasing job opportunities, reducing unemployment, the largest covered shopping centre in Europe—and all that set in the heart of the beautiful Essex countryside.

Our slogan is "Basildon means business" and that we certainly do. On Monday 8 December for one week there will be an exhibition in the Palace of Westminster entitled "Basildon—a town of opportunity". It will be Basildon week in the House of Commons and the Commission for the New Towns will be promoting the event in order to stimulate even further interest in our town. So the commitment to permanently securing Basildon's position as the finest new town in the country is as strong as ever. [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Nevertheless, if that is to be achieved, it is essential that housing policy in Basildon is directed in such a way as to meet people's evolving needs.

Most hon. Members, however long they have served in the House, would agree that the number one problem that appears time after time in their postbags is that of housing. [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] It is often said that an Englishman's home is his castle. If that is so, experience has shown me that everyone wants to live in as pleasant a castle as possible.

Mr. Walter Harrison (Wakefield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My parliamentary colleagues keep shouting out "Reading, reading" and I am unable to listen to the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) giving us the good information that he tries to do. Is it possible for you to bring order to the place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for protecting the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess).

Mr. Amess: The purpose for which new towns were established is well known and in Basildon's case it was largely for the purpose of easing housing pressures from the east end of London—the area from which I hail. In that objective there can be no question but that the Commission for the New Towns has certainly been successful. I only regret that some of the London boroughs, having been given that opportunity, continue to pursue misguided housing policies which only seem to make matters worse and people's lives miserable.

I doubt whether there is any town in the country where the Government's housing policies have been so successful as in Basildon. The right-to-buy legislation has transformed our town. I can tell my hon. Friend the Minister how much my constituents welcome the latest legislation which we discussed only last night which increases still further the discount on the sale of council and commission properties and the reduction in the period before one can resell a property thus purchased. Record sales of council and corporation property have been

achieved in Basildon. All that in spite of intense opposition to our right-to-buy legislation from the three Socialist parties — Labour, Social Democrat and Liberal. I still find it extraordinary that Socialist councillors can purchase their council or corporation property while supporting parties which do not approve of such an opportunity for the general public. Such behaviour is hypocritical.

While on the question of the right to buy, I want to make my first specific point to the Minister. It seems unfair to me that constituents who desperately wish to purchase their property are being denied that opportunity because their homes are regarded as unfit for a mortgage, particularly due to the problem of clay heave in Basildon following the drought that we experienced some years ago which has meant that a number of properties still require underpinning. There seems to be a great reluctance among the financial institutions to grant mortgages on such properties and my constituents are being deprived of their right to buy.

Let me also say at this point how greatly my constituents look forward to the Government's recently announced initiative on the right to rent. There is no properly established rented sector in Basildon and encouragement in that area is welcomed by my constituents. In the 1960s a number of high-speed system-built properties were developed in Basildon. About 1,000 such properties were built in the Vange area of the town. Roughly half of these are now owner-occupied and the other half are still rented. Over the past two or three years, structural problems have arisen and the houses are now known widely as suffering from concrete cancer. I understand that the builder who was responsible for using faulty components is now bankrupt.

People who originally purchased those properties from the corporation or the council have found it impossible to sell them. A blight has been put on them by the financial institutions and the Vange housing action group has been formed under the leadership of Mr. Williamson. I pay tribute to the group for its efforts in getting the matter resolved. The Under-Secretary has not only seen the properties, but has seen a deputation at the Department.

I understand that the Housing Defects Act 1984 does not cover these properties. I fully appreciate the compexities of this matter, but I have to tell the Minister that the patience of my constituents seems to be wearing a little thin. The circumstances of the people concerned are different, but all of them are clamouring for action and they are looking to me in particular to provide it. They want to know what arrangements are being made for examining each property to ascertain what, if anything, is wrong with it. If there are faults, the tenants want to know whether the property will be repaired or bought back and at what price. They have also said that if a dwelling is given a clean bill of health it is essential that some direction be given to the financial institutions and estate agents to lift the blight that hangs over the properties.

We all realise that, strictly speaking, the responsibility lies with the purchaser and the surveyor, if an independent structural survey were carried out. However, I have made it clear that the Government, who rightly introduced legislation enabling stock to be purchased, accept responsibility in this matter. I ask for a clear and precise statement about the future of these properties, and an assurance that individual counselling be given after that announcement has been made.

Another worry about housing in Basildon is the speculation, much of it mischievous, about the disposal of the 16,000 properties presently under the management of the commission. Despite the fact that before its demise the development corporation made it clear that for the immediate future there would be no change for tenants, the management was passed to the new town commission. The then Socialist council, without direction, decided at great expense to the ratepayers to embark on a so-called consultation exercise with the commission tenants. This is quite disgraceful, but what can one expect from a body that is now involved in a consultation process about local education, a service provided exclusively by Essex county council? Of course, it all has to do with political posturing and an attempt to cause divisions where none should exist.

It is intolerable that rumours have been spread causing alarm, especially to the elderly, suggesting that if a body other than the council takes over the houses, repairs and the like will not be carried out. At present, a high proportion of the housing stock is in public ownership. As the future ownership of the 16,000 dwellings is considered, our prime responsibility will surely be to determine who is best able to manage those properties and who would have the necessary financial support to bring them up to the high standard that we hope they will reach.

I now come to the final matter that I wish to bring to the Minister's attention — the problem of housing single people in Basildon. I want to take the opportunity of this debate to launch a campaign for a building programme to house them. They are the forgotten many.

Just about every conceivable building design has been tried in Basildon and I shudder when I hear that some of the designers are receiving awards for estates which have since suffered appalling problems. In two such developments — Langdon hills and Felmore — action groups have been formed to try to sort out the district heating systems.

Sheltered housing in Basildon, however, enjoys an extremely high reputation throughout the country. It has even been used as an advertisement in a party political broadcast. There is constant demand from the elderly to be given the opportunity to live in Basildon. I pay tribute to all the assistance that Essex county council, the Commission for the New Towns and the Government give the elderly in Basildon, and deservedly so, and the tremendous assistance that is received from voluntary organisations.

Unfortunately, I have a never-ending stream of young people coming to my surgeries who desperately need accommodation either to rent or purchase. These are second or third generation Basildonians. Their parents came originally to the town on the understanding that their children would be housed, but, alas, the demand has not been met. There is constant frustration locally about the points system, which has been changed with the result that applicants feel that the goalposts are continually being shifted.

Some of my constituents have commented that if they become pregnant and have a baby they will be housed. What a spirit in which to take on the responsibility of bringing a child into the world. I have a high proportion of single-parent families in Basildon, who desperately need support and proper accommodation. I have always maintained that I do not want any more of our local countryside lost to building programmes, but there are clearly certain areas still where specific building programmes could be undertaken for single people. I am

[Mr. Amess]

sure that my constituents would welcome an extension of the highly successful shared ownership scheme and the provision of flats and bed-sits.

Another possibility that could be explored is the provision of the university complex type of accommodation at reasonable rents, or community studio apartments. There is a need also for a sophisticated version of YMCA-type accommodation for young people who face tension and difficulties at home and yet are not quite ready for the responsibility of independent accommodation. There are no tower blocks such as those in London which could be decanted and used for accommodation for single people, even if the equation were as simple as that. There are no doubt parts of estates, however, that could be usefully reserved for those with special housing needs. The possibilities are endless and all avenues should be explored in an effort to improve matters.

I started by extolling the virtues of Basildon as a new town and a place of opportunity. Young people are its lifeblood. We owe it to them, while recalling the visit of Lord Stockton to the town in the early 1950s, to provide a base from which they can flourish.

12.12 am

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): Lord, Stockton's successor by many removes, who is standing at the Dispatch Box, visited Basildon, in the company of his hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), not so long ago, and saw the realisation of the dream of his noble Friend. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the issue of housing in Basildon and for giving me the opportunity to put on record what the Government are doing to try to help Basildon.

I must congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon on his exemplary and persistent performance in putting across to the Government the concerns and views of his constituents. I went to Basildon with him, as I have said, to hear some of them at first hand. My hon. Friend is an advocate for Basildon and its people, and they should realise that.

This evening my hon. Friend has concentrated on housing issues that affect his new town. As he said, it is ironic that a new town which was set up in response to housing problems should now be having problems of its own. My hon. Friend has raised four main groups of problems, the last one being the need for better provision for single people in the town. I hope that time will allow me to deal with that issue. If not, I should like to write immediately after the debate to let him know what we are doing on shared ownership and in a number of other directions which may be of help.

I shall concentrate on the activities of Basildon council under Socialist control, what can be done to help those suffering from clay heave and what I have decided to do to help in the Vange area. What Basildon did when it was under Socialist control to try to put the frighteners on its tenants was a scandalous misuse of public money and a politically immoral act of a particularly savage kind. It tried to put across inaccurate information to frighten tenants, some of them elderly, about their future. There is no basis for what was done. The Government and people of most political views deplore such actions.

Yesterday, during the almost closing stages of the Housing and Planning Bill, Labour Members said that it is important not to tell lies about Government policy. I congratulate those on the Opposition Benches who said that. I only wish that the message had filtered through to those on Basildon council who have done so much damage not just to their standards as councillors, but to those living in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Some people living there find that their houses suffer from considerable problems of ground movement and clay heave. My hon. Friend has mentioned dwellings that have suffered ground movement. I understand that that in itself should not prevent subsequent mortgageability. There is no particular reason why it should do so, provided that reasonable remedial action has been taken. The development corporation devised a thorough system of underpinning, and I understand that houses repaired in this way have subsequently been sold to tenants, with finance coming from building societies.

My hon. Friend and I both strongly support the right to buy. If my hon. Friend has specific, named cases of building societies that will not accept otherwise traditional houses that have been underpinned by the new town corporation, perhaps he will write to me giving me chapter and verse, so that I can have the matter looked into further. We have evidence that houses properly underpinned under the scheme have been sold satisfactorily.

I know that the welfare of people in the Vange area has greatly concerned my hon. Friend since the matter came to light two years ago. I must go into this in some detail, and it is the kind of detail that Mr. Williamson and his friends on the action group, whose work I admire, will want to look at carefully in *Hansard*. Subject to certain conditions, the Commission for the New Towns should be authorised to offer to buy owner-occupied HSSB houses and flats at 95 per cent. of what their value would be in the absence of faults or potential faults associated with the use of the HSSB system in Basildon.

The percentage has been adopted by analogy with the provisions of part XVI of the Housing Act 1985, formerly the Housing Defects Act 1984, although the dwellings are not being designated under that Act. It is important to get these details down. The offer will be open only to owner-occupiers who bought their HSSB dwellings before the date of this announcement today. The commission will be authorised to buy only in cases where an owner-occupier will on completion offer vacant possession to the commission. Ample notice would be given to remaining eligible owner-occupiers of any closing date for the scheme, and in practice I expect it to operate for several years.

The faults, or potential faults, associated directly with the HSSB system which will be disregarded for the purposes of arriving at prices to be offered by the commission to owner-occupiers are, first, any defects in the structural connections between the concrete components and, secondly, actual or potential corrosion of steel reinforcement in structural concrete components. In all other respects valuation will reflect the actual condition of the dwelling.

The HSSB dwellings, both owner-occupied and tenanted, are, I am told, mostly very satisfactory and pleasant homes. The main problem for owner-occupiers arises from the general reluctance of building societies and others to lend on these dwellings, in view of the possible

risk of defects developing later in the concrete components as a result of building methods that were employed at that time. The commission is carrying out investigations to see whether precautionary measures may be advisable to reduce any risk of structural problems arising in the shorter term. The commission will indeed inform the HSSB residents in due course about any such measures. Owners who sell to the commission will remain subject to the normal rules on repayment of discount.

I do not want to burden the House with too much detail, but it is important to put a few further facts before my hon. Friend and the House. Discount will be repayable if an owner purchased at a discount and if, at the date of sale to the commission, a period of less than five years — or three years, once the relevant provisions in the Housing and Planning Bill have taken effect — has elapsed since that earlier transaction. An owner's reasonable costs for conveyance of the property to the commission, incurred after the commission has notified the owner of the particular proposed terms for purchase of his home, will be met by the commission. I hope that my hon. Friend welcomes that provision.

To spread the cost and to alleviate practical problems, the commission may have to arrange applications from owners wishing to sell to it in order of priority. Clearly it cannot all be done at once. Priority will be decided on personal circumstances — for example, medical or social difficulties, or the need to move for reasons of employment elsewhere in the country or abroad. I must stress that each purchase by the commission will, of course, reflect the prevailing conditions in the housing market at the time that the transaction takes place.

Those who are now tenants of HSSB houses and flats in Basildon and who have the right to buy under the Housing Act 1985 will retain that right. Any future purchases of HSSB dwellings from the commission or any other owner will, however, be at the purchaser's own risk. It is very important that my hon. Friend's constituents understand that after the date of my announcement any future purchases of HSSB dwellings from the commission or any other owner will be entirely at the purchaser's own risk. Such purchasers must be aware that they may be unable to sell their homes at a future date and that they will not be eligible for repurchase of their homes by the commission.

I hope that on reflection my hon. Friend will feel that he is able to welcome the announcement that I have made in considerable detail, for which I apologise both to him and to the House. However, I know that if I had not made the announcement in considerable detail, my hon. Friend would have been inundated with requests for details from his constituents. I am sure that Mr. Williamson and others will welcome this news. If anything that I have said is not clear on the record, my hon. Friend knows that he has only to write to me for elucidation.

In the three or four minutes of this Adjournment debate that remain, I turn to the fourth and last point that my hon. Friend raised — the problems encountered by young home seekers in Basildon and the relationship of these people to our right-to-buy, but, more importantly, to our right-to-rent policies. Their problems are typical of those faced by their contemporaries elsewhere, particularly in the south of England. The Government's response must be to try to create a favourable climate for the forms of private investment which will be the best solution to those problems. The need to find permanent owners for the new town housing in Basildon may itself help to create a favourable climate for new housing initiatives in the town.

That is a broad-brush generalisation, but it will probably turn out to be true. If, for example, housing transfer leads to a widening of the present narrow housing association base in that part of the country, there might be reason for optimism about Basildon's ability to draw in private investment to tackle today's housing problems and tomorrow's housing expectations.

The armoury of new weapons that the Government are giving themselves to try to help is considerable. We need to encourage City institutions and building societies to provide housing for rent. The Building Societies Act 1986 and the Housing and Planning Bill certainly enable us to make significant moves in that direction.

Shared ownership will be of great importance. The shared tenancies that we are developing, again in co-operation with the private sector, will be important in widening the basis of rented and part-rented, part-owned homes in Basildon and elsewhere. Last week, I announced that I was pursuing an initiative of particular relevance to young people who move away to take up jobs. This is the flat share scheme which we are discussing with building societies and housing associations. Under this scheme, young people will get newly-built or well-converted flats that are especially designed for sharers at affordable rents. I hope that by referring to these three or four schemes my hon. Friend will see that we are developing as fast as we can, in a totally new look at the overall rented sector, ways of helping people who are faced with the sorts of problems he so clearly discussed.

There is hope for the future in the rented sector and the part-owned, part-rented sector and there is help at present for those people who live in the Vange area who have battled so hard for the scheme. I am pleased to take the opportunity presented by my hon. Friend's admirable speech to announce this scheme.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 5 November 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MOTIONS FOR UNOPPOSED RETURNS

Mr. Speaker: I call the First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means to move the eight motions for unopposed returns in his name.

CLOSURE OF DEBATE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 31

Return ordered,

respecting applications of Standing Order No. 31 (Closure of debate) during Session 1985-86; (1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before House or Committee when claimed	Whether in House or Committee	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and (2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before Committee when claimed	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Return ordered,

of Instruments considered in Session 1985-86 by the Joint Committee and the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments respectively pursuant to their orders of reference, showing in each case the numbers of Instruments subject to the different forms of parliamentary procedure and of those within the Committees' orders of reference for which no parliamentary procedure is prescribed by statute, and the numbers drawn to the special attention of the House or of both Houses distinguishing the ground in the Committees' orders of reference upon which such attention was invited; and of the numbers of Instruments considered by a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. and by the House respectively, in Session 1985-86, showing the number where the question on the proceedings relating thereto was put forthwith under Standing Order No. 79(5).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

PRIVATE BILLS AND PRIVATE BUSINESS

Return ordered,

of the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders introduced into this House and brought from the House of Lords, and of Acts passed in Session 1985-86;

Of all Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which in Session 1985-86 were reported on by Committees on Opposed Bills or by Committees nominated partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection, together with the names of the selected Members who served on each Committee; the first and also the last day of the sitting of each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; the number of days on which each selected Member served; the number of days occupied by each Bill in Committee; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been proved; the Bills of which the Preamble were reported to have been not proved; and, in the case of Bills for confirming Provisional Orders, whether the Provisional Order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

Of all Private Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which in Session 1985-86 were referred by the Committee of Selection to the Committee on Unopposed Bills, together with the names of the Members who served on the Committee; the number of days on which the Committee sat; and the number of days on which each Member attended;

And of the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders withdrawn or not proceeded with by the parties, those Bills being specified which were referred to Committees and dropped during the sittings of the Committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

PUBLIC BILLS

Return ordered,

of the number of Public Bills distinguishing Government from other Bills, introduced into this House, or brought from the House of Lords, during Session 1985-86 showing:

(1) the number which received the Royal Assent, and

(2) the number which did not receive the Royal Assent, indicating those which were introduced into but not passed by this House, those passed by this House but not by the House of Lords, those passed by the House of Lords but not by this House, those passed by both Houses but Amendments not agreed to; and distinguishing the stages at which such Bills were dropped, postponed or rejected in either House of Parliament, or the stages which such Bills had reached by the time of Prorogation. *[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SELECT COMMITTEES

Return ordered,

for Session 1985-86, of statistics relating to the membership, work, costs and staff of Select Committees with so much of the same information as is relevant to the Chairmen's Panel and the Court of Referees. *[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Return ordered,

of the days on which the House sat in Session 1985-86 stating for each day the day of the month and day of the week, the hour of the meeting, and the hour of the adjournment; and the total number of hours occupied in the sittings of the House, and the average time; and showing the number of hours on which the House sat each day, and the number of hours after the time appointed for the interruption of business. *[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

STANDING COMMITTEES

Return ordered,

of (1) the total number and the names of all Members (including and distinguishing Chairmen) who have been appointed to serve on one or more of the Standing Committees showing, with regard to each of such Members, the number of sittings to which he was summoned and at which he was present; (2) the number of Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items referred to Standing Committees pursuant to Standing Order No. 79 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.) or Standing Order No. 80 (Standing Committees on European Community documents) considered by all and by each of the Standing Committees, the number of sittings of each Committee and the titles of all Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items as above considered by a Committee, distinguishing where a Bill was a Government Bill or was brought from the House of Lords, and showing in the case of each Bill, Estimate, Matter and other item, the particular Committee by whom it was considered, the number of sittings at which it was considered and the number of Members present at each of those sittings. *[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SPECIAL PROCEDURE ORDERS

Return ordered,

of Special Procedure Orders presented in Session 1985-86; the number withdrawn; the number annulled; the number against which Petitions or copies of Petitions were deposited; the number of Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively considered by the Chairmen; the number of such Petitions certified by the Chairmen as proper to be received, and the number certified by them as being Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively; the number referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses; the number reported with Amendments by a Joint Committee, and the number in relation to which a Joint Committee reported that the Order be not approved and be amended respectively; and the number of Bills introduced for the confirmation of Special Procedure Orders:

Of Special Procedure Orders which, in Session 1985-86, were referred to a Joint Committee, together with the names of the Commons Members who served on each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; and the number of days on which each such Member attended. *[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Competition Policy (Monopolies and Mergers Commission)

1. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to discuss competition policy.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): My last meeting with the chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission took place on 15 April 1986.

Mr. Pavitt: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, will he discuss in depth the human tragedies which are occurring as a result of rationalisation of takeover bids which lead to unemployment and family tragedy? In particular, will he look at the present takeover bid for Ault and Wyborg in the London borough of Brent, which is a good borough, and the loss of jobs that will occur if the takeover bid continues? Is it not time to stop raising the golden calf and the idol of glory for profit and look at people instead?

Mr. Channon: I shall refrain today from commenting about the London borough of Brent. The Office of Fair Trading is making preliminary inquiries into the possible takeover referred to by the hon. Gentleman. If it qualifies on assets or market share under the Fair Trading Act 1973, the Director General of Fair Trading will advise me in the normal way on the question of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Grylls: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people will be greatly encouraged by the setting up of the Leisener committee to look into competition policy? Does he agree that the Government's determination to see the growth of small and medium sized businesses, which has already had considerable success throughout the country, means that competition policy should be shaped to protect smaller firms from restrictive practices and excessive merger mania?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has already given evidence to the committee and I shall certainly consider with great care the submissions that he and his colleagues have made about these issues, which I believe have much support in the House.

Mr. Ashdown: Within the context of competition policy, will the Minister explain how competition in the British economy is increased or improved by converting British Gas and British Telecom from public monopolies into private ones?

Mr. Channon: The whole House is well aware of the great success of the British Telecom flotation, and I am sure that the same will happen with British Gas.

Mr. Cash: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that detailed negotiations are taking place within the European Community on competition policy and that it would be highly desirable if more persons were qualified in matters relating to competition law? Does he agree that the Law Society and the Bar Council should take these matters seriously, because, on the whole, people are at present singularly ill qualified to advise on matters of that kind.

Mr. Channon: That is an important and interesting point. I agree with a great deal of what my hon. Friend has said. There is considerable interest in the commission about the whole area of competition policy and that, of course, will be considered in the review.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Secretary of State accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) has raised an important matter? There are great injustices in this area. Will he, at the Dispatch Box today, condemn predatory acquisition by companies of other companies only for the purpose of closure? Is he aware that in the case of the Scottish and Newcastle attempt to take over Matthew Brown last year the only intention was to close the brewery in Workington? That is happening in other areas of the economy and it is for Secretaries of State to condemn that practice from the Dispatch Box. Scottish and Newcastle may well come back with a further bid in the next two months.

Mr. Channon: It would be quite wrong of me to make any comment on cases that might come before me when I have to decide whether to refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is essential in such cases that I preserve my right to act on my own discretion in deciding whether to refer matters to the MMC.

Mr. Dorrell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, increasingly, competition policy should be operated on a Europe-wide rather than a purely national basis? Is it not crazy for us to be talking on the one hand about completing the internal market while on the other hand we are continuing and often even reinforcing the fragmentation of the European market?

Mr. Channon: The European aspects are always taken into account in deciding whether to refer a proposed takeover to the MMC. I have some doubts about the proposition advanced by my hon. Friend that it would be preferable for those matters to be decided by bodies other than the British Government.

Power Plant Industry

2. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what support he is giving to the British power plant industry; and if he will make a statement on the industry's domestic work load.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Giles Shaw): My Department is providing substantial support in a number of ways: through financial assistance under the Industry Acts, through our support for innovation scheme, and through assistance on exports. The domestic work load is largely dependent on the ordering programme of the electricity boards, which is a matter for the boards themselves.

Mr. Brown: As the Minister says, I accept that the domestic ordering programme is a matter for his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Energy. Nevertheless, the Department of Trade and Industry is the British power plant industry's sponsoring Department. Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House why the Government have failed to provide a sufficient domestic ordering programme to provide a base load for the domestc industry so that we can compete on equal terms with foreign companies, in foreign markets, and so that the British industry can survive?

Mr. Shaw: I respect the hon. Gentleman's connection with the power plant industry because it is a major producer in his constituency, but he will know that the domestic ordering of the power industry is not within the control of the Department of Trade and Industry. He will know equally that it might help to see the Opposition applying a power policy indicating that nuclear power is to play an increasing role in power ordering. With regard to the Government's investment in assistance to the power plant industry, the hon. Gentleman should know that some £55 million has been invested under the Industry Acts since 1980, and some £164 million on aid and trade proposals, which have led to export orders worth £770 million, which is a very substantial amount.

Mr. Ron Brown: Recognising that many companies, including NEI Peebles in my constituency, have been artificially starved of orders, largely because of the attitude of the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board, will the Minister use his muscle and influence to encourage the bureaucrats to place orders of that type, whether it is coal fired or turbo? That is important. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that scrap and build is an important argument put forward by the trade union movement, because many power stations have antiquated equipment and it is about time that it was replaced?

Mr. Shaw: I cannot follow the hon. Gentleman's advice and put forward a scrap and build programme. He will know that the CEGB is considering the case for new coal-fired stations, but equally he will know that no decision will be made on that until the Sizewell issue has been determined.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that thousands of jobs are tied up in the nuclear power industry and that there has not been an order for a nuclear power plant for more than eight years? That uncertainty has to be resolved shortly if those thousands of jobs are to be protected for the future.

Mr. Shaw: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's point. He will be aware that the results of the Sizewell inquiry are awaited shortly by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Williams: The Minister rightly referred to the export performance of the industry. I am sure he will agree that the industry cannot survive on domestic sales alone. He also referred to the support that the Government have given the industry. What does he have to say about the complaint of the industry that in the export markets the financial package is now the crucial factor in determining whether we win or lose an order, and that in that respect the Government are crippling the industry by their abnormally high interest policy?

Mr. Shaw: The right hon. Gentleman is not being wholly fair about that. I took the opportunity to meet the

chairman and deputy chairman of NEI recently because I was aware of their restructuring operation. Their presentation showed that the support being offered to help win export orders is quite considerable. I accept that any industrial operator, particularly a heavy plant operator, would want there to be a reduction rather than an increase in interest rates.

Balance of Trade

3. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the current balance of trade.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): In the year ending September there was a surplus of £403 million on the current account.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply, but does he agree that in the third quarter of this year there was a deficit of £1·2 billion? When he looks to making up that deficit, what proportion of it does he envisage will come from increasing exports of manufactured goods and what proportion from increased exports of services? There is great fear on this side of the House that the Government are being complacent while the country's manufacturing base is being eroded.

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman's figures are somewhat misleading, because we are broadly in balance for the whole of this year, although I recognise that one month in the third quarter was especially depressing. Our manufacturing productivity has increased by 32 per cent. since 1980, and in the last quarter our export of manufactures was at its highest level. I believe that that trend is on the increase.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my hon. Friend agree that our trade balances will not be improved by excessive pay increases which are not linked at all to productivity and thus raise unit labour costs, making us much less competitive in world markets?

Mr. Clark: Unit labour costs are certainly a constituent in the competitiveness of British goods and services, and it is on competitiveness that success will depend. I know that Opposition Members have an insatiable appetite for bad news, but the news remains extremely good on the balance of payments front.

Mr. James Lamond: In the midst of all this so-called good news, can the Minister explain why, if we have a surplus on our balance of trade, the pound seems to be slipping all the time against almost every other currency in Europe?

Mr. Clark: The sterling-dollar rate has remained effectively the same for the past six months. The alteration in the rate against our competitors' currencies in Europe will doubtless be widely welcomed by British industry, which will no doubt endorse the hon. Gentleman's statement.

Sir Paul Bryan: Would my hon. Friend care to speculate on the long-term effect on the balance of trade if the Labour party's proposal for the control of foreign investment were put into force?

Mr. Clark: The somewhat homespun remedies peddled by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and his friends would unquestionably have a very serious impact on confidence in the City and on the total of our trade in invisibles, which amounted to nearly £8 billion this year.

Mr. Skinner: Is not the truth of the matter that during the past seven years the manufacturing deficit incurred as a result of the Government's policies has reached more than £4 billion, whereas there was a surplus of a similar amount on 1979? Does the Minister agree that that resulted in the Government having to go to the international monetary markets to borrow $4 billion on 3 September — the highest amount ever borrowed by a British Government since the end of the second world war? Did that not result in the Chancellor of the Exchequer having to prop up the pound at the Tory party conference, using £1 billion that ought to have been used to prop up British industry and get Britain back to work?

Mr. Clark: The hon. Member's trip down memory lane, which was an almost daily occurrence under the Labour Government, betrays his ignorance, which is honourably based on a contempt for these international organisations. The decline in manufacturing trade is based on consumer preference for foreign goods. Until British manufactures are wholly competitive, that preference will continue to be expressed.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend agree that both the level of imports and the buoyancy of retail trade indicate that there is no lack of demand in the economy, contrary to the view expressed by all the Opposition parties, and that there are considerable market opportunities waiting for British companies to exploit them?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Consumer spending is going up very fast, and that very increase is sucking in imports and giving rise to the imbalance to which attention has been drawn. Until British goods are competitive in all sectors and all aspects, a rise in consumer spending is likely to have this effect.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Robin Cook.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Robin Cook: I am grateful to my hon. Friends. As I am a newcomer to these exchanges, can the Minister guide me as to any other country in the world which has managed to combine an oil surplus with a deficit on its visible trade? Did his office provide the Budget forecast of a £3 billion surplus on current account by the end of this year? Can he name another Budget forecast, even of this Government, which has gone quite so wildly wrong as that?

Mr. Clark: First, I must express my commiserations to the hon. Gentleman for the personal electoral reverse that he suffered. I recognise that that may cast a pall of gloom on some of the judgments that he offers at present. The forecast that he cited is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Minister accept that his complacency in relation to the balance of payments is quite staggering? Does he accept that the forecast, not least of his own Treasury, for the balance of payments deficit in the forthcoming year is somewhere between £2 billion and £3 billion? Does he accept that that is because of the uncompetitiveness of British industry, which has been damaged by Government policy over the past seven years.

and what do the Government intend to do about unit labour costs, oil prices and the exchange rate in order to reverse that?

Mr. Clark: In fact the bad figures arose at a time when in the last two quarters the oil price had been averaging between $12 and $13 per barrel. If OPEC raises the oil price to $18 per barrel, the overall effect on our oil exports will be an increase of nearly 50 per cent. in value. Therefore, that particular ingredient is likely to be corrected in the next year if the OPEC objectives are achieved.

Lack of competitiveness is certainly a serious drawback, as I have said on a number of occasions already, but productivity in manufacturing industry is more than 32 per cent. up since the advent of this Government.

Mr. Speaker: Question No. 4. I call Mr. Robert Atkins *[Interruption.]* Order. We are making very slow progress and have only reached question No. 4.

Mr. Nellist: That is because a lot of hon. Members asked questions on the last subject. They were waiting for the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), who has only just come into the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Patience is a great virtue in this place.

Copyright Reform

4. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the automotive industry about his proposals for the reform of the copyright laws.

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): I have received a large number of representations from the automotive industry about the unregistered design right proposed in the intellectual property White Paper.

Mr. Atkins: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is some concern and not inconsiderable anger in the automotive support industry, represented by large and small companies in my constituency, at the proposals in the White Paper? Will he recognise that their fears are based on two counts, because they believe, first, that the proposals will affect competition and the quality of the products that they can provide to the industry and the public, and, secondly, that this will have a deleterious effect on jobs in those small and large companies throughout the length and breadth of the country?

Mr. Pattie: I am aware of the points that my hon. Friend has raised. He will not be surprised to hear that they are being taken into consideration.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister assure the House that serious consideration will be given to the points that have been raised, as there is a general feeling in the industry that the manufacture of component parts for the vehicle industry will lead to further redundancies, factory closures and general unemployment? There is a factory in my constituency which manufactures hydraulics and everybody there—from management to shop floor workers—is worried stiff about the future. Does the Minister intend to withdraw the proposals contained in Cmnd. 9712, allow the industry to prosper and thus remove the fear hanging over it?

Mr. Pattie: I think that the industry will be reassured when we are able to come forward with a suitable compromise proposal, which we are at present discussing with it and which I think will meet most of the objections that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Is my hon. Friend aware that his comment that the industry will be reassured when he comes forward with proposals will reassure many British manufacturers? Does he recognise that a substantial amount of risk is involved in new investment in new products and that that risk must be rewarded by some form of protection? Does he also recognise that there is limited scope for relaxing his proposals when standard proprietary items are incorporated in an original design?

Mr. Pattie: I agree with my hon. Friend. However, I am sure that both he and the House will not wish me to detain the House on these complicated issues at this stage, other than to say that all these matters are being very carefully considered.

Mr. Loyden: Industry in many cases is very concerned about the implications of the White Paper. Does the Minister not agree that the first thing that should have been done was to indentify the implications of the questions that cause uncertainty in the industry, before the White Paper was produced?

Mr. Pattie: Yes, that is a perfectly fair point. However, we were addressing the fact that it is also important to recognise that a certain degree of copyright protection is needed for original designs. The problem is to balance the respective interests in the motor industry. That is very important.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my hon. Friend aware that the only important point for the retail customer is to know what he is buying? The customer should then have freedom to buy what he wants. My hon. Friend must guard against manufacturers who will not supply spare parts, but only replacement units at hideous cost, which is taking the consumer for a ride.

Mr. Pattie: I am obviously aware of the consumer arguments. We must also recognise, however, that there is a perfectly legitimate case to be made on behalf of those who devise the original spare part, component, or whatever it may be, because they have rights, too.

Mr. Ashdown: Nevertheless, these were Government proposals. Will the Minister explain to the House why the Government believe that their proposals will increase freedom of choice and competition in British industry?

Mr. Pattie: Yes, I will. It is important for the welfare of those in the British automative industry that those who originate designs should have a proper, though not an excessive, degree of protection. That in itself will assist the competitive process.

Mr. Jackson: On the question of the reform of copyright law, will my hon. Friend reaffirm the Government's commitment to abolish the licence of right on pharmaceutical products in the course of the next year?

Mr. Pattie: We have said that we wish to abolish that right as soon as the legislative timetable permits.

Electrical Installation Work (Safety)

5. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received about standards of safety in electrical installation work in domestic and commercial buildings.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I have not received any representations to date, either from private individuals or from official bodies, concerning the standards of safety in electrical installation work in domestic buildings. Questions concerning such work in commercial buildings are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I have, however, recently received a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) concerning the attempted installation by a private contractor of substandard electric cable in a private dwelling house belonging to one of his constituents. This matter is being examined by the British Approvals Service for Electric Cables (BASEC) and the trading standards department of the local authority concerned.

Mr. Thurnham: In view of the danger of accidents, including loss of life, from faulty installation work, does my hon. Friend consider that those who do this work should be properly qualified and appropriately registered?

Mr. Butcher: As a result of my hon. Friend's substantive question my officials contacted the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting for its views on this question. I am advised that there has been no recorded increase in accidents attributable to faulty electrical installation. If my hon. Friend would like to discuss a particular incident in his constituency, I am ready to look into the matter.

Mr. Pavitt: In view of the likelihood of the onset of a wet winter, will the Minister discuss with the Department of the Environment the problem of electrical installation standards in inner city areas where repairs are needed, because a large number of houses are out of date and where, because insufficient sums are available from rates as a result of rate capping, it is impossible to ensure safety for old-age pensioners whose electrical apparatus needs to be renewed?

Mr. Butcher: As the hon. Gentleman will know, that is predominantly a question for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I hope he will be reassured that electrical installations in domestic premises are subject to the provisions of the Electricity Supply Regulations 1937, which give appropriate safeguards for the proper wiring of customer premises.

Mr. Squire: Does my hon. Friend recognise that in the whole of installation work, be it electrical, gas or plumbing, we lag behind most other countries in our determination to protect consumers through a system of registration which would allow for those who are properly qualified to be recognised and rewarded?

Mr. Butcher: I have consulted some of the bodies concerned and I am convinced that at present the process of self-regulation is working to the consumers' benefit.

National Infrastructure

6. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received concerning investment in national infrastructure.

Mr. Channon: None, Sir.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Minister heed the advice given recently by the CBI to invest in infrastructure and realise that every job created in the infrastructure costs £8,000, whereas every job created through tax cuts costs £25,000? Is it not a disgrace that the Government have failed to invest in the infrastructure?

Mr. Channon: I do not agree with that. The Government's record on infrastructure spending is extremely good. Total public sector capital expenditure is more than £21 billion a year, capital spending on motorways and roads has increased considerably and National Health Service capital expenditure has also increased. I could give the House millions of examples.

Mr. Richard Page: Is it not true that the regions that are at present making their submissions are doing so to obtain money in their bids from the EEC and are unlikely to put the best complexion on these matters? In answer to the whingeing of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), is it not the case that the shire counties, such as Hertfordshire, have invested hundreds of millions, if not thousands of millions, of pounds in the regions through the redistribution of the rate support grant? Therefore, does my hon. Friend agree that due recognition should be given to the shire counties for the sacrifices that they have made over the years?

Mr. Channon: As I represent part of a shire county, I understand what my hon. Friend is saying. I agree with a great deal of the first part of his remarks.

Mr. Pike: Does the Secretary of State accept that many parts of the deprived regions will be shocked by the complacency of the reply given a few moments ago? We need to spend far more money on the infrastructure to deal with the problems facing us, especially in the north-west and in other deprived regions. When will the Government tackle those problems and get people back to work?

Mr. Channon: I am astonished at what the hon. Gentleman says. In the north-west nearly £1 billion has been spent on regional aid since 1979, the Merseyside development corporation has been created, an urban development corporation for Trafford Park and Salford has been created, there is a commitment to develop Manchester airport, £58 million has been invested in improvements, there are £105 million worth of urban development grants and there has been a 65 per cent. increase in the north-west water services.

Mr. Marland: Does my right hon. Friend agree with the view of all those of us who are regular users of the motorways that the miles and miles of cones that we must work our way around are a vivid example of how much is being spent, not only on motorway repairs, but on improvements in the infrastructure?

Mr. Channon: Motorway cones are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I agree with my hon. Friend that capital spending on motorways and trunk roads has increased by almost 30 per cent. in real terms. Why are Opposition Members so solemn and sour about it all?

Mr. Gordon Brown: With regard to the submission to the European regional development fund on infrastructure and other aspects of Government policy, will the Secretary of State tell us exactly who is responsible for saying that the prospects for reducing unemployment are gloomy, frighteningly bleak, or impossible until fundamental problems of public investment and expenditure are resolved?

Mr. Channon: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government make no forecast of future unemployment. We do not think that that would be sensible. Opposition Members are determined, not surprisingly, to make trouble for the years ahead. Under the rules of the ERDF, the Government have to provide assumptions that are used for financial planning purposes only, and they are assumptions, not forecasts. It is the same as the public expenditure survey forecast. The hon. Gentleman is trying to create a great deal of fuss about nothing.

Mr. Hanley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the views of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) are typical of the views of the Liberal party nationally? I cannot find any local Liberal organisation that will allow expansion of roads, railways, prisons, tunnels or airports in its own area.

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

British Leyland

7. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the state of the Government's proposals for the privatisation of British Leyland.

Mr. Channon: The position on Leyland Bus and Unipart was announced to the House on 24 July. Since then, Rover Group has announced agreement in principle to dispose of a majority interest in Jaguar Rover Australia. It is also taking forward the disposal of a majority interest in ISTEL.

Mr. Hamilton: Will the Secretary of State give some security and peace of mind to British Leyland, its workers, dealers and its customers, by giving an assurance that there will be no negotiations before a general election about the sale of British Leyland or, for that matter, Land Rover?

Mr. Channon: There are no such plans. I explained the position on Land Rover some months ago, and there is no change in that position. I have already explained what is happening in a number of subsidiaries of the Rover Group. Our policy remains to seek to return the businesses, together or separately, to private ownership. I am awaiting a report from Mr. Day on the financial structure of the company. I have nothing to tell the House beyond that.

Mr. Madel: Whether British Leyland is or is not privatised, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that the Government will not allow it to engage in unfair competition with existing car and truck manufacturers in this country?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that undertaking. I well understand his concern about events in his constituency.

Mr. Terry Davis: How will privatisation help to solve British Leyland's real problem, which is a sales problem? When will the Secretary of State ask the directors of British Leyland to do something about the failure of the company's sales and marketing management to sell the vehicles that they are employed to sell, instead of constantly calling for redundancies among the men and women who work in the factories, who have significantly improved both quality and productivity and who are then rewarded with the sack?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is being most unfair and unreasonable, which is not typical of him. I have asked Mr. Day to do his utmost to try to improve the commercial performance of the Rover Group, which is in everyone's interests. The group is making considerable strides in quality, production and output, and is doing extremely well. I am asking Mr. Day to look at the whole commercial future of the Rover Group and I look forward to receiving his proposals. I am sure that they will be received enthusiastically by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Do the privatisation plans that have been announced mean that the money that will then be released will be available for reinvestment in the Rover Group, bearing in mind the excellent new car — the Sterling — which has a splendid future if it has the right investment, for which Mr. Day is asking?

Mr. Channon: All questions about investment in the Rover Group will have to await Mr. Day's report. I am naturally in agreement with my hon. Friend about the quality of the Rover Group's cars and I only wish that more people, both inside and outside the House, would buy them.

Mr. Nellist: How seriously can we take the Secretary of State's list when the privatisation from British Leyland of Self-Changing Gears in Coventry took place in June without any announcement to this House until it was squeezed out of the Secretary of State in a written answer? Despite promises about the safety of the company in the harbour of Cummins Engines, within 12 weeks of privatisation 20 per cent. of jobs were lost. How seriously can we take the list when that sort of thing happens?

Mr. Channon: Surely all hon. Members know that in order to stay in business a firm has to win sufficient orders. It is unfortunately the case with Self-Changing Gears that its failure to win sufficient orders resulted in job losses.

Mr. Forth: Can my right hon. Friend give me assurances about the proposals for ISTEL in my constituency? Will he assure me that sufficient weight will be given in considering the management buy-out proposals to the strength of the skills of the existing staff and that those skills will be fully weighed against any financial considerations which might otherwise be considered alone?

Mr. Channon: As I told the House, I am awaiting the assessment from the Rover Group of its majority interest in ISTEL. I will, of course, bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Secretary of State please confirm that the instructions given to Mr. Day are to talk to everyone with a view to privatising Austin Rover? Why are the Government in such a hurry to sell off an indigenous car manufacturer? Do they not want a British stake in the motor industry, and are they not worried about the loss of jobs?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House, I am sure unintentionally. The instructions given to Mr. Day are to run this company commercially and to get it into a good commercial state in the interests of all concerned. The Government were elected with a manifesto commitment to privatise the group and our policy remains to seek to return the businesses, together or separately, to private ownership. No doubt that will take a considerable time.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend make it plain to private investors that he is genuinely open to all suggestions for the sale, investment or collaboration in respect of British Leyland and that he is not merely marking time until the next general election ?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend will realise from the list that I read to the House of the parts of the Rover Group that are being disposed of that an energetic programme is proceeding on that front. I am sure he welcomes that, and I endorse what he said.

Mr. John Smith: The Government caused deep worry to everyone in the Rover Group when their surreptitious proposals to sell it off to the Ford Motor Company were revealed earlier this year. In view of that, do the Government not owe to the people who work for the Rover Group a solid commitment to see it through to commercial success? Is it not more important to maintain and expand its production than to seek to privatise it? Will the Secretary of State give the House an undertaking that if proposals by Mr. Day are to reduce substantially the volume of production in the Rover Group he will reject those proposals?

Mr. Channon: I had better wait to see what Mr. Day says before I commit myself to reject or accept anything that he puts forward. I do not agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman about a surreptitious attempt to sell off the Rover Group or the effect that such a thing would have on the commercial future of the group. The Rover Group, and other car companies in Britain, must depend for commercial success on quality, price, reliability and delivery. Rover has an excellent story to tell on those points and I hope that it will achieve commercial success, because that is the Government's policy.

Takeover Bids

8. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many takeover bids have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the past 12 months; with what result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: In the 12 months to date, 14 acquisitions or proposed acquisitions have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Of these, four proposals were abandoned and the references laid aside. One proposal was found by the commission to operate against the public interest, three were found not to operate against the public interest and six investigations are still in progress.

Mr. Greenway: May I respectfully point out to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) that the Ault and Wiborg paint company which he mentioned is in my constituency and not in Brent? He ought to know his own constituency a little better. However, I agree with much of what he said. Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents are under 90 days' notice while the proposed takeover by Hoechst or Bergers is being investigated? Does he not agree that this is unfair to both parties? I hope that he will refuse to allow that takeover to occur. Meanwhile, will he say whether the referral process could be speeded up, in the interests of all parties?

Mr. Channon: I note the alliance between the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) and my hon. Friend. I can assure my hon. Friend that I will expect to listen to the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading if this merger qualifies on assets or market share. I cannot anticipate the result of the director general's inquiries. My hon. Friend also asked about the delay in Monopolies and Mergers Commission procedures. I am certainly prepared to consider whether there are circumstances in which the commission might be asked to report in a shorter period. The current review will consider that.

Dr. Godman: The Director General of Fair Trading is examining a proposal to take over the British Sugar Corporation. Will the Secretary of State head off that takeover by the Italian company, Ferruzzi? Is he aware that that company seeks, not a monopoly of the British sugar market, but a monopoly of the European market? If it is successful, the interests of the producers in the African, Caribbean and Pacific cane sugar-producing countries will be severely harmed, and so will the interests of those employed in the United Kingdom's cane sugar refineries.

Mr. Channon: I note the hon. Gentleman's views. The proposed takeover of British Sugar by Tate and Lyle and Ferruzzi is being investigated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The hon. Gentleman will understand that it would be quite inappropriate of me to comment at this stage or to anticipate the commission's recommendations.

Mr. Gale: Further to the answer given to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), and to set the record straight, will my right hon. Friend confirm that, following its successful defence of the Scottish and Newcastle takeover, during which Matthew Brown suggested that Scottish and Newcastle might wish to close one of its breweries, the first thing that the Matthew Brown management did was to close one of its breweries? Consequently, does my right hon. Friend agree that small is not necessarily secure? Does he further agree with the general principle that it is better to have a large domestic industry that is able to compete with European companies than a fragmented industry that cannot do so?

Mr. Channon: All the questions show that hon. Members have a keen interest in this topic. I shall await their views as to what, if any, changes should take place in our competition policy.

Mr. Heffer: Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that some time, somewhere, this Government will actually defend the interests of British industry?

Mr. Channon: With respect, that question is untypical of the hon. Gentleman, and most unfair.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I welcome the sterling work done by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but does my right hon. Friend realise that many of my constituents are particularly concerned about the delays in reaching

decisions on the Plessey and Allied-Lyons cases? Will he confirm that there has been great concern about the cartel operated by some petrol companies? Is there not a case for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to look into that?

Mr. Channon: The Director General of Fair Trading has looked at that latter point several times. I have already said that we shall try to find ways of speeding up such decisions, although I think that that will be difficult without further legislation. The GEC-Plessey matter was decided this summer, and I seem to remember that most of the House agreed with the decision reached.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Secretary of State aware that today several redundancies have been announced at the Royal Ordnance factory in Leeds as a direct result of Vickers buying out its sole competitor? Would it not have been better if that takeover had been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Channon: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. I followed the recommendation given to me on that occasion by the Director General of Fair Trading, that there would be no detriment to competition. Consequently, I thought that it was unreasonable to refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Airbus Project

9. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has yet received an application from British Aerospace for launch aid in connection with the Airbus A330/A340 project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: My Department received an application from British Aerospace for launch aid in respect of the proposed Airbus A330/A340 programme on 20 October. A detailed appraisal of the application has been set in hand.

Mr. McCrindle: If my hon. Friend accepts that Airbus can be truly competitive with the large American aircraft manufacturers only if it can offer airline customers a broad range of products, is he aware that several of us hope that the Government will react favourably towards the application from British Aerospace, especially as launch aid was provided for the A320?

Mr. Pattie: I note my hon. Friend's remarks. He will recall that the success rate of the A320 programme appears to be very encouraging, offering the prospect of a reasonably early repayment of that launch aid. We understand the case being made about the family of aeroplanes. At present, Airbus is engaged in a marketing operation on the A340 in order to establish the level of airline interest in that aeroplane.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Can the Minister confirm that a decision on the application by British Aerospace is expected before the end of this year? Will he take that decision irrespective of any collaboration with McDonnell Douglas? Will he confirm that the British Aerospace and Airbus Europe decision stands on its own right and will be considered in that light, that the £750 million launch aid is acceptable in principle to his Department and that we can expect a decision before the end of the year?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me at this stage, when I have just told the House that the detailed appraisal has just been set in hand, to say what level of expenditure is likely to be acceptable to the Government. We have to take into account the market opportunities for one of the aeroplanes in particular.

British Aerospace seeks and expects a decision from the Government in the first quarter of next year, not before the end of this year.

When I met my ministerial colleagues during the Farnborough air show to discuss whether the talks with McDonnell Douglas should be suspended, it was agreed that Airbus had asked for that suspension and that the suspension should take place to give Airbus the opportunity to market the A340 without suggestions that it would go in with McDonnell Douglas.

I believe that there are advantages in the longer term in certain of the other programmes, such as the stretch version of the A320, where co-operation with McDonnell Douglas could be fruitful.

Mr. Stern: Has my hon. Friend seen the forecast of the expected market for aeroplanes of the size of the A340 up to and including the year 2005? Does he agree that the forecasts are extremely encouraging, and will he bear them in mind when evaluating the application for launch aid?

Mr. Pattie: Yes, I have seen the forecasts. Those are precisely the types of factors that we want to take into account to see whether those forecasts accord with the forecasts that we and others are making.

British Leyland

11. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements his Department makes for the monitoring of progress of companies privatised from British Leyland where that company retains an interest.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are no special arrangements beyond the normal role of the Department in its sponsorship of private sector companies.

Mr. Nellist: I am tempted to ask why not. Coventry Climax was privatised from British Leyland in 1981 and it has lost 80 per cent. of the original 3,000 jobs, with not a penny being paid to British Leyland by the consortium that took it over. Do the Government not feel any responsibility for such a conspicuous failure of privatisation? When the Government promise a secure future for workers, should they not monitor before failure occurs? Why was such monitoring not exercised by the Government?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that the British Leyland position in regard to the problem is fully protected. Coventry Climax has been through a difficult time in the sale and marketing of its products and it is currently in the hands of the receiver. It would, therefore, be wrong for me to make any further observation about the existing company.

In relation to privatisation and jobs, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that 1,500 more jobs at Jaguar have been created since privatisation. Its profit record is now £121 million on the 1985 returns, as opposed to a loss of £32 million in 1981.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that companies privatised with British Leyland, as well as those that are still within the group — for example Leyland

Trucks — have done everything asked of them by the Government in terms of quality and marketing support, but that, none the less, the market is too small to take the number of products produced? Will my hon. Friend confirm the importance of giving Government support for export sales through loans, credit arrangements and in leading an attack into the market that is so important for companies such as Leyland Trucks?

Mr. Shaw: I accept my hon. Friend's point in relation to Leyland Trucks. He will be aware that there is substantial over-capacity in the trucks business in Britain and probably worldwide. That is why he will, no doubt, welcome, as I did, the arrangements announced by Mr. Day in Paris vis-a-vis the Daf company. In relation to overseas exports, the Export Credits Guarantee Department stands behind many British companies in their fight to obtain a fair share of overseas markets.

Mr. John Smith: As Coventry Climax is now in receivership, and as, at the time it was sold off from British Leyland a bright future was promised to the work force, should not someone who initiated that privatisation give an apology to them for what has happened? In so far as it is now the receiver's proposal to sell off the business, perhaps in parts, is it the Government's intention to permit the receiver to sell to the highest bidder irrespective of the consequences for the west midlands economy of the loss of substantial engineering industries?

Mr. Shaw: I understand the right hon. and learned Gentleman's natural anger at the fact that the privatisation of the company has not proved successful, but I must confess that it surely is right to see that a company can market its goods and services without subvention from the taxpayer. In the case of Coventry Climax, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman well knows, there have been difficulties for it in achieving its sales performance. That could happen to any company, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows full well what the consequences of that would be. The receiver's task is to seek to dispose of assets and to obtain a realistic return for the creditors of the company, and that is in his and the creditors' best interests.

Land Rover

13. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any representations about restoring Land Rover to the private sector.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The position has not changed since my right hon. Friend's statement on 24 April.

Mr. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that, with the problems overhanging the volume car market in Britain, about which we all know, there is really no reason to leave Land Rover in the same embrace? Will my hon. Friend be speaking to Mr. Graham Day about the possibilities of offering that company to the British shareholder?

Mr. Shaw: I understand my hon. Friend's views and I witnessed his robust performance on television recently. However, my hon. Friend and I should await the corporate plan proposals that Mr. Graham Day is now preparing.

Mr. Hoyle: Would it not be better to leave Land Rover where it is, with British Leyland? Does not all this selling off and disturbance, particularly of the profit-making parts, mean that all that will be left is a loss-making rump, parts of which will either go out of business or face vast redundancies? Does the Minister not care at all?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman must be patient. It is important to see that all parts of the Rover Group are profitable, and I hope that they will be. That would be the ideal objective, hence the massive effort being made by Mr. Day and his colleagues, not just to restructure the company but to make a massive effort on the commercial development of the range of products that they possess. Some of the success stories within the volume car group, including the 25 per cent. increase in the Rover 200 sales compared with a year ago, show that they have been successful.

Mr. Alan Howarth: When my hon. Friend is considering questions relating to the privatisation of Land Rover, or, for that matter, of British Gas, will he bear in mind that the Japanese authorities are not permitting foreigners to apply for shares in Nippon Telegraph and Telephone when it is floated later this month? Does he agree that it is an important point of principle that there should be reciprocal openness in financial markets? Will my hon. Friend and his colleagues be willing, as circumstances may require, to invoke the reciprocity clauses of the Financial Services Bill?

Mr. Shaw: I admire my hon. Friend's ingenuity in tacking that supplementary question on to a question about Land Rover. However, I take his point that there should be a free market in investment as well as in sales.

Telecommunications (Competition)

14. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Director General of OFTEL to discuss competition in the telecommunications industry.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend last met the director general on 16 October.

Mr. Weetch: I thank the Minister for that answer. When he next meets the Director General of Oftel, will he tell him that in the course of a recent adjudication on a competitive tender by British Telecom in the Ivory Coast, one of my constituents, Jonathon Wash, part of the personnel of BT, was killed in doubtful circumstances, and I suspect foul play? Will he, through the Director General of Oftel, prevail on BT to lift the conspiracy of silence on the matter?

Mr. Pattie: I am sure that the first thing that the House would want me to do is to express sympathy to the family of the hon. Gentleman's constituent who has met his end in that way. We have no locus in the matter of requiring BT to make information available to him. However, I know that the chairman of BT reads the proceedings of the House with particular care, and this exchange may well produce the effect that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

Mr. Hickmet: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that, in the supply of telecommunications equipment to British Telecom, system Y was won on merit by Thorn-Ericson, and will lead to the creation of 700 to 1,000 jobs in my constituency? Will he also bear in mind that GEC, despite having numerous friends on both sides of the House and in high places, failed to win the contract because of the

failure of system X? Will he ensure that the Director General of Oftel is not subject to undue pressure from any quarter?

Mr. Pattie: Anyone who has met the director general will know that he is unlikely to take lightly pressure from any quarter. I am sure that it is best to leave the merits of prospective systems to be tested in the market place.

British Shipbuilders

15. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what current proposals he has to privatise British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The long-term objective is to return as many of British Shipbuilders' yards as possible to the private sector when circumstances permit.

Mr. Holt: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he comment on the rumours that are sweeping Teesside that the Cuban order, which was likely to keep Smiths Dock open, is now going to the Wear shipyards? Is there not time, even now, for Smiths Dock to be reprieved in view of these rumours?

Mr. Shaw: I am aware that rumours have been circulated to that effect, but I cannot comment upon them now because I do not have the up-to-date information. My information was that negotiations on the Cuban order had still some considerable way to go. My hon. Friend will know why it was that British Shipbuilders decided that it saw no further need for the capacity of Smiths Dock. That is why it deemed it right to dispose of it and to sell the assets that it contained.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Minister accept that so far the privatisation of the shipbuilding industry has meant job losses in the privatised sector and has threatened the viability of the public sector? Will the Minister face his responsibilities to an industry which has gained less than 1 per cent. of world orders this year? In the negotiations over the European intervention fund, will he stand up for a better deal from the fund than the one that is foreshadowed in the draft directive which the Government seem prepared to accept?

Mr. Shaw: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall fight extremely hard in the negotiations over the European intervention fund, which I believe to be a crucial component for United Kingdom shipbuilding. I think that the hon. Gentleman should be careful before he suggests that the industry's problems can be solved by shipbuilding remaining in the public sector. He knows well that a number of significant orders have come to sectors that have been privatised. I trust that he welcomes the announcement made today that the Atlantic Conveyor will be stretched at the Scott Lithgow yard.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman's point of order arise directly from questions and not amount to a continuation of questions?

Mr. Hoyle: It arises directly from questions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Very well.

Mr. Hoyle: I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to be critical, but is it right that an hon. Member should come into the Chamber when a question is being asked and thereafter rise in his place and be called to ask a supplementary question?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, that is perfectly in order.

Later—

Dr. Godman: I wish to raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which refers specifically to the last answer given by the Minister of State to my hon. Friend the Member for——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That matter could come into the category of a continuation of Question Time. I do not think that I can take it because, as the hon. Member said, it refers to an answer given by the Front Bench, which patently cannot be a matter for me.

Master J. R. Bickford Smith

3.34 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order with you of which I have given you notice. Last December I criticised the senior Master in the Royal Courts of Justice, Master J. R. Bickford Smith, and a firm of solicitors, Elborne, Mitchell and Co., in a debate in this place. I wrote subsequently to the Lord Chancellor and asked him to set up an inquiry. There was considerable correspondence between us and since then I have heard nothing.

I wish, Mr. Speaker, to raise three matters with you in relation to the incident to which I have referred. Although I have heard nothing, yesterday the Lord Chancellor replied to the inquiry by way of a planted written question, which was answered by the Attorney-General. The question was tabled by an hon. Member who is a little fellow from one of the Leicester seats. You will know him, Mr. Speaker, because he prattles on but cannot be seen because he is so small.

My first point, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an important matter.

Mr. Sedgemore: My first point is this: is it not a gross abuse of both Houses for the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney-General to conspire in this way to answer a query put by an hon. Member in this fashion?

My second point—it is even more important—is this: the Attorney-General's answer impugns the integrity of a private solicitor as well as myself. I take no exception to the Attorney-General impugning my integrity, if he so wants, on the basis of an unreliable witness who told a whopping great lie and who can be seen most days wandering around the Royal Courts of Justice in his masonic pinny and severed trousers.

I question the use of the parliamentary question and answer procedure. I have always been under the impression that if an hon. Member wishes to criticise another, he either has to put down a substantive motion, something which I have often done, or he has to be prepared to give notice to the hon. Member and debate the matter in the House. I may be wrong about that. It may be perfectly legitimate for the Attorney-General to use the answer to a written question to impugn the integrity of hon. Members, but I am sure you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that it is a matter of importance both in principle and in practice. When I become a Minister, will I be allowed to do it?

My third point is this: in his answer, the Attorney-General impugned my integrity for attacking one of the judges and has said—I believe rightly—that one can attack a judge only by a substantive motion. The only person whom I attacked in that debate was Master Bickford Smith. Master Bickford Smith is not, never has been and never will be a judge. The Attorney-General sought to widen the interpretation by saying that that rule applies not only to judges but to senior judicial figures. I ask, Mr. Speaker, where one draws the line as to who is and who is not a senior judicial figure.

Let us consider the Lord Chancellor's son. He is a barrister and a Minister—a Member of this House. Is he a senior judicial figure? When I was in chambers with him, we used to call him a weak-chinned, bespectacled swot. Be that as it may, I ask you, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That expression may not be unparliamentary, but it is undignified.

Mr. Sedgemore: I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule on these matters. I like the Lord Chancellor. Everything that I learnt at the Bar was learnt in his chambers, where I was a pupil to Mr. Justice Maurice Drake.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member for having given prior notice of his point of order. He has raised a major matter. I should like a little time in which to consider it before I give a ruling.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Further to the point of order——

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Further to the point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time.

Mr. Bruinvels: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to put the record straight on this matter. Obviously, I am particularly envious that you had prior notice of this matter. I did not. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) is concerned that a shorter Member than he actually got the right answer, but I refute the fact that I asked a flagrant planted question and that I had showed some interest in this case. I seek a withdrawal of the unfortunate allegation—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Some years ago I heard the phrase "planted question", but I do not know what it means.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance in this matter. So far as I am aware, during the lifetime of this Parliament, the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has libelled numerous members of the public—professional men—using the cloak of parliamentary privilege. How much is it in order for that to be done? How far does it demean the traditions of the House that that is permitted? How should hon. Members conduct themselves in relation to the matter? The hon. Gentleman today again libelled professional men. If he did that outside the doors of the Chamber, he would face a libel writ that would bankrupt him.

Mr. Sedgemore: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) but, in fact, the private solicitor and I held a press conference this morning. The private solicitor not only bitterly criticised and challenged the lies of Master Bickford Smith but took on the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney-General. It has been done outside. If these people—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about you?"] I have also released to the press my correspondence with the Lord Chancellor. If these people want to take out writs—I know that they will not—they can do so.

Mr. Hickmet: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Master Bickford Smith is constrained by the rules of the Supreme Court from issuing a writ against that so-called hon. Member, as well he knows.

Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me clear up this matter in relation to what the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) said. We have in this place, and we shall be claiming it after the State Opening next week, freedom of speech. Every hon. Member has freedom of speech. Of course, he has to exercise it with discretion as he sees it, but that is entirely a matter for the hon. Member concerned.

Hon. Members: Make him withdraw it.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) as the "so-called hon. Member". I think that that statement demands that he withdraw it immediately.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear the hon. Member say "so-called hon. Member". We must keep to the rules of the House. We always refer to each other in this place not by our surnames but by our constituencies. If the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe said those words, I am sure that he would wish to withdraw them.

Mr. Hickmet: We are all hon. Members and we have to discharge that obligation which is upon us. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch knows the best description that fits him.

Hon. Members: No—withdraw!

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the interests of good order, I ask the hon. Member to refer to the hon. Gentleman by his constituency and not as a so-called hon. Member.

Mr. Hickmet: I withdraw.

Prime Minister's Questions

3.43 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have two statements to make. The first arises out of Question Time yesterday. After questions yesterday I promised to reflect on the interventions I had made in an effort to ensure that supplementary questions to the Prime Minister were confined to matters within her responsibility. In subsequent exchanges, the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), in a helpful way, asked that we should revert to the practice whereby such supplementary questions were prefaced with some remarks which were relevant to the Prime Minister's activities on the day on which the question is put. I agree with this approach and would ask hon. Members to make it clear early in their question that the question concerns matters within the Prime Minister's responsibility.

So far as my rulings yesterday are concerned, I believe that my intervention in the question of the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), which was about happenings in Manchester city council as reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, was correct. Subsequently, I intervened in a supplementary question by the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham), which up to that point had consisted of a fairly lengthy preamble about the Japanese economy. I now recognise that that preamble was probably intended to lead to a question about this country's economy. In those circumstances, my intervention may have been over-hasty, although I should emphasise that its purpose was to try to make certain that supplementary questions were brief and in order and that hon. Members still hoping to be called would be given a chance to question the Prime Minister. In these circumstances, I hope that the hon. Member for Blackley will accept my apology. I will try, as I hinted yesterday, to compensate him in some appropriate way.

Having said that, I hope that I shall have the support of the House in my efforts to ensure that questions to the Prime Minister deal with matters for which she is responsible.

Later—

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for your generous statement. A Back-Bench Member rarely receives a statement from the Speaker such as the one that I received today, and I will savour this occasion for many a long month.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I also thank you for your consideration when you intervened on my question yesterday? I fully accept your judgment that I was out of order. I hoped to bring it round, and I hope that I may have a chance to ask the Prime Minister a question similarly in the very near future.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Sir, in respect of your statement, may I say how obleeged I am and how obleeged I am sure the House is?

Mr. Speaker: I thank all hon. Gentlemen concerned for their generosity.

Standing Orders

3.45 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a second statement to make.

The House's public business Standing Orders have grown over many years. As new Standing Orders have been added, their arrangement has become somewhat confusing. Therefore, the Clerk of the House has, with my authority, rearranged the Standing Orders into a more rational sequence. I am sure that this will be for the convenience of hon. Members.

The Procedure Committee has been informed of the intention to rearrange the Standing Orders and has raised no objections. I must emphasise that the substance and application of the Standing Orders remains completely unchanged. All the Standing Orders have been renumbered. The new numbers will be shown clearly in the new publication, with convenient conversion tables from the old numbers.

I should perhaps draw the attention of the House to one change. Standing Order No. 10 — "adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration" — with which we are all familiar will in future be Standing Order No. 20. The rearranged Standing Orders will come into use on the first day of the new Session.

Mr. Mordecai Vanunu

3.47 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): As this is a good day for contrition all round, may I express my regret that my acute disappointment yesterday led me astray in implying, improperly, that you, Mr. Speaker, have ever been unfair. Obviously, the unfairness lay with me. I apologise for that.

I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the disappearance from this country of Mr. Mordecai Vanunu."

Two years ago, Mr. Dikko, a former Nigerian Minister, was found drugged in the hold of an aircraft. At that time, there was, rightly, an outcry in the House. Now, Mr. Mordecai Vanunu has vanished from a London hotel and, like a rabbit out of a hat, has appeared in Israel. He went through no normal recognised channels, but he was in this country one day and a short time later was in Israel.

Mr. Vanunu took the state's shilling and betrayed its trust. That is odious, but it is not the point of asking the House to become involved in the matter. Civilised countries cannot expect to pluck someone at will illegally from another country as though he were cargo. How did Mr. Vanunu get out of Britain? Mossad seems to be implicated, but no explanation has come from Israel, except that the matter is too secret to be discussed there. However, no matter which concerns a person who suddenly disappears and reappears somewhere else can be too secret to be discussed in this House. I believe that this type of thing should leave a chill, because there is an implication that if the motive is worthy, a country may do what it will in another country. That cannot be right.

I believe that the House should be given all the information that is at the disposal of Her Majesty's Government so that we at least know that our Government have reacted and are acting properly in this serious matter. That is why I have taken the time of the House to call for the Adjournment on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) has asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the disappearance from this country of Mr. Mordecai Vanunu."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said. I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Not on that matter, I hope.

Mr. Marlow: I do not in any way challenge what you have said, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, you are aware of the diplomatic significance of these matters. There was an issue with the Syrian embassy, action was taken with regard to the embassy and there was a statement in the House. The world looks upon this House to be objective. I wonder how we can get a statement, a question or some

explanation from a Minister as to what the Government know about what seems to be a sinister issue. Our status in the world and our objectivity in the middle east depend upon the House being able to find out the truth and the reality behind the situation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): If you manage, Mr. Speaker, to follow the advice that has been given by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) in trying to ascertain some more information for the benefit of the House, would you bear in mind that the whole affair may lead us to Johnson Matthey bank, Abdul Shamji and, who knows, Conservative Central Office?

Mr. Speaker: My ruling is concerned only with whether this matter should have precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. As to the wider issues, I do not in any way underestimate what was said by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) or what was contained in the submission of his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). These are serious and important matters. The hon. Member for Selly Oak must find other ways of seeking to obtain his objective, but he cannot do so, unhappily, under Standing Order No. 10, for the reasons I have given.

Insurance Companies

3.52 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the law relating to the commutation of insurance policies and contracts.

I am sure that the House will agree that this week or this month, as in every other week or month, some person will surrender their life assurance policy because they cannot afford to continue the payments, for some other reason which could be justified. The case which prompted me to introduce this Bill was when two people decided to marry, each owning an assurance policy. They decided to surrender their individual policies and take out a joint policy which was more suitable to their needs as a married couple.

The present code of practice applied by assurance companies concerning the discontinuation and surrender of life assurance policies is, in my opinion, ambiguous, does not work, and in no way helps, assists or protects policyholders.

The purpose of my Bill is to give protection to people who enter into an agreement with an assurance company, to ensure that a proper and understandable code of practice is introduced and carried out and that fairness is applied at all times to policyholders. The present code of practice states:

"The intermediary shall draw attention to the long term nature of the policy and to the consequent effects of early discontinuance and surrender."

When asked about the consequent effects in real terms — that is, what the policyholder would lose on surrender after two, three or more years — no one can say what they will be. My experience is as follows. A person takes out a life assurance policy with Pearl Assurance, for 10 years. After making payments for nearly two years, the person requests advice on how to obtain a different policy to cover herself and her husband. After making repeated requests for advice and obtaining no satisfaction, the only course open to her is to surrender the policy. Over the period that the policy was in being £156 was paid to the insurance company. Following surrender £106 is paid to the policyholder. In other words, one third of the money paid to the company by the policyholder, plus interest, is retained by the company. On reflection, it could appear that the insurance company preferred the policy to be surrendered than to give additional advice.

When dissatisfaction is expressed by the policyholder and an explanation is requested as to why so much money is deducted from the payments made, it is said that in the early years of the policy commission to the agent, stamp duty, costs and servicing the business are the real reason for the deduction. Even if one accepts that the point made by the actuary for the insurance company is correct, and that there are initial charges, to take over 32p in the pound for every pound paid is exorbitant and most unsatisfactory.

Some policyholders do face genuine hardship. I witnessed people having to surrender insurance policies during the miners' strike, and there is the case I have just referred to, and last weekend, when I held advisory meetings throughout my constituency, a further case was brought to my notice of a person who lost his job in his early sixties. When his employment benefit period had ceased, he applied to the Department of Health and Social

[Mr. William O'Brien]

Security for supplementary benefit. He was asked what capital he had and what other investments he held. Being the truthful person he is, he declared that he held a life insurance policy. He was told to inquire what the income would be from the asssurance policy if it had to be surrendered. When he had obtained the full information and reported back to the DHSS, he was told to surrender the policy, and for a year or so he has had to provide for himself and his wife on the income from his assurance policy and his savings. When I asked my constituent about his assurance cover he naturally replied that the cover ended when he surrendered the policy.

One can see that that case introduces a different dimension, in which the Secretary of State for Social Services becomes involved. However, I repeat that such action towards policyholders puts them at the mercy of insurance companies and the discretion of the actuary or any other person who decides how much should be paid to policyholders when the policy is discontinued and how much should be retained by the company.

I could quote other cases and examples. I make the plea that there should be some protection for those people by law against insurance companies which, without explanation, deduct over 30 per cent. from payments made on life assurance policies.

If an actuary of an insurance company makes a judgment about how much should be deducted from payments for a life assurance policy, regardless of how long the policy has existed for, the insurance company should make a statement showing what the money that is being retained covers. If the policyholder is not satisfied with the information received, or if answers are not forthcoming, he should be able to appeal to the Registrar of Friendly Societies with confidence because of information that he will have obtained if my proposals are accepted.

We should also consider more information being given to people who intend to take out assurance policies. More information should be given during the interview about the consequences of early surrender or if the policy is discontinued. More information about what a person would lose if the policy were discontinued could be given, rather than just leaving it to the intermediary to draw attention to the consequences.

My Bill refers to the money paid by the policyholder. He should know how his money is divided and who receives what payment for what service. I beg the House to accept the Bill because it is in the best interests of policyholders and offers a more democratic procedure for assurance company practices.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. William O'Brien, Mr. Walter Harrison, Mr. Terry Patchett, Mr. Alec Woodall, Mr. Ron Lewis, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Doug Hoyle and Mr. Allen McKay.

Insurance Companies

Mr. William O'Brien accordingly presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the commutation of insurance policies and contracts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday next and to be printed. [Bill 232.]

Orders of the Day

Housing and Planning Bill

Lords Reason for insisting on their amendment to which the Commons have disagreed and disagreeing to the amendment made by the Commons in lieu thereof, considered.

Lords Reason:

The Lords insist on their amendment to insert a new clause before clause 1—*Exception to the right to buy with respect to dwelling houses for persons of pensionable age*—and disagree to the amendment proposed by the Commons in lieu thereof for the following Reason:

Because the said Commons amendment fails to provide adequate safeguards for the stock of local authority rented accommodation specially suitable for people of pensionable age.

4.2 pm

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, That this House doth not insist on its disagreement with the Lords amendment.

The issue here is the exclusion from the right to buy of non-sheltered housing for the elderly, which is a serious matter. The House will recall from our debate last Monday that the Lords amendment would do two things. First, it would simplify the test of suitability which houses and flats must meet it they are to be exempted from the right to buy. Secondly, it would take decisions away from the Secretary of State, where they now lie, and put them in the hands of local authorities.

The Government made a reasonable and constructive response to the first of those proposals. We accepted the case for simplifying the test but, on the second issue, we felt unable to agree for the reasons that I explained. The Government amendment, which was carried in the House on Monday, would have ensured that decisions remained with the Secretary of State. That is the point at issue between us.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): It was.

Mr. Patten: By insisting on its amendment, the other place is insisting that decisions on exemption from the right to buy should be taken away from the Secretary of State and put in the hands of local authorities.

The Government, recognising the strength of feeling in another place, have reconsidered this matter, but I have to say that we remain absolutely convinced that decisions should rest with the Secretary of State. We are, however, at a very late stage in the Session and there are many important provisions in the Bill, some of which are eagerly awaited by many thousands of tenants who want to buy their own homes. Deadlock now would result in serious delays in the implementation of those provisions.

Against that background, we have reluctantly decided, in the interests of ensuring that the Bill is enacted quickly, not to insist that the Commons amendment be reinstated.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): The Government have lost.

Mr. Patten: I shall make the Government's stance absolutely clear. We are determined that as many tenants as possible should have the right to buy. It is tenants who have lost from the amendment. We are determined that tenants should be able to exercise their rights, and that

includes elderly tenants. We have accepted from the start that there should be some limited exclusions but — I choose my words carefully — the Government are not prepared to see elderly tenants denied the right to buy simply on grounds of age. That would be wrong, but I fear that, whatever its good intentions, it will be the effect of the Lords amendment.

The Lords amendment puts decisions in the hands of local authorities. Some will do their best to administer the test fairly. I recognise that, and they will be councils under all forms of political control, but there will be others who will not administer it fairly. They will use their discretion unscrupulously to exclude elderly tenants generally from the right to buy. That is the opinion not just of myself but of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who acknowledged it in last Monday's debate when he said:

"I also accept what the Minister said, in a round about way, about some local authorities being unreasonable. I do not deny that. Some local authorities, given wide discretion, would be wholly unreasonable. There is no doubt in my mind about that."—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. 704.]

So concluded the hon. Member.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Read the next sentence.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to put on the record that which he wants to put on the record if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker. The Government cannot accept the circumstances that I have described. [*Interruption.*] I feel that we have the intelligentsia with us on the Opposition Front Bench today. We are talking rather than trying to shout people down. Opposition Members should listen because 350,000 elderly tenants could find themselves excluded from the right to buy. That is monstrous and we cannot accept it.

I give the House a firm undertaking that we shall return to this issue as soon as the opportunity arises. We shall seek the earliest opportunity to put decisions back in the hands of the Secretary of State where they belong. In the meantime, my message to elderly tenants is that if they are thinking seriously about buying their homes, they should apply now. Until the new provisions come into force, the Secretary of State's jurisdiction continues and elderly tenants can be sure of a fair hearing from us.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): I have the impression from what my hon. Friend said that the Government might introduce legislation to put right what the other place has changed. How can he be certain, as any amending legislation would have to go to the other place, that that legislation would go through unless our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was prepared to put some of us in another place? If not, she will still be short of a majority when such legislation goes to the other place in the next Session. I accept that some councils may cause difficulty, which the Government should not tolerate, but will the Government allow a fair period to see how councils behave before taking the action that my hon. Friend is proposing?

Mr. Patten: We shall of course monitor extremely carefully what happens in the coming months once the Bill passes into law. As for my hon. Friend's first point about transmigration to another place, I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*—

Mr. Patten: I do not wish to detain the House. I shall not give way again.

The Government cannot regard this outcome as satisfactory, but our debates have served one useful purpose for Conservative Members. They have clarified the position of the official Opposition and of the alliance parties who in the debates were represented by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

I have already quoted the comments of the hon. Member for Perry Barr. His party is prepared to support an amendment that he acknowledges will result in abuse of tenants' rights. He went on, of course, to suggest that tenants will have redress in the courts. I believe that was the substance of the succeeding sentence. But how many elderly tenants would even contemplate that?

We had an equally revealing contribution from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, who on Monday, speaking with the full authority of the alliance, made a formal statement of alliance policy. He said:

"we should like increased local discretion over exemptions and discounts."—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. 711.]

According to the hon. Gentleman, that is official alliance policy, and it is an extremely revealing statement. The alliance is in favour not just of local discretion over exemptions from the right to buy — the issue raised by this amendment — but also over rates of discount. The whole notion of tenants' rights is now given a new meaning — rights are what one's local council decides one should have. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) was quite right to describe the hon. Gentleman's statement as a "revelation". Tenants will now know what to expect from the alliance.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What about the abolition of the Lords?

Mr. Patten: That is not a matter for me.

It is quite clear that none of the Opposition parties cares about the wish of many elderly tenants to become home owners. Even worse, they seem to care precious little about fairness and consistency in the application of rules. The Government care. We are not prepared to stand by and watch tenants cheated of their rights by bureaucratic arrogance simply on grounds of their age. I repeat the undertaking that I have given. As soon as there is a suitable opportunity, we shall return to this issue. We shall seek to put decisions back in the hands of the Secretary of State, where they belong.

Mr. Rooker: I honestly thought that the Minister would have had a little more grace in accepting the second defeat on this issue suffered by the Government in another place. Frankly, the hon. Gentleman exaggerated the situation out of all proportion.

This is not a general exclusion for elderly people, and he knows it. Elderly people have no fear in general that they will lose the right to buy. A figure of 350,000 has been mentioned, yet in the last two years the only argument has been about 900 applications, out of which 300 exclusions have been granted. That is all that has brought this about. It is therefore a travesty to say that this is a general exclusion. It is not.

The Minister also pleads lack of time. I understand that. On more than one occasion I virtually said that if he got stuck for time, the Opposition would facilitate the Bill

[Mr. Rooker]

provided that the Government got rid of the clause that removes security of tenure for 5 million council tenants. That offer was never taken up.

4.15 pm

In addition — it may not be his responsibility — between Third Reading in this House on 24 April and Second Reading in the House of Lords on 30 July, nothing whatever was done about the Bill. Therefore, there is no excuse for having left the Commitee and other stages of the Bill until November.

The Minister is right that many people are waiting for the new benefits — leaving aside the argument about security of tenure — that are available in the Bill. Many of them were promoted by the Opposition and redrafted by the Government. Many people and many local authorities will be waiting for the start of a new urban regeneration grant. Therefore, we do not seek to delay the Bill. The Government have chosen to give in to the Lords, even though they did not have to. They could have challenged the other place again, and, although they have chosen not to do so, they have made their decision in a way that is somewhat less than graceful.

As I said on Monday, I am under no illusions, and neither should any other hon. Member be. If local authorities act unreasonably, they should be condemned. The point is that the criteria under which they must act are set out more clearly in the amendment than previously to determine whether a property is particularly suitable for an elderly person. We are talking not about elderly people, but about properties that are particularly suitable for them. The means of deciding whether such properties are particularly suitable is to look at the list of factors in legislation that must be taken into account. If any local authority strays outside those factors, it will be acting unreasonably, and I and any other hon. Member concerned about fairness and justice will condemn it.

It is true that, at the end of the day, our constituents can have recourse to the courts. But, as I said on Monday, so far as I am aware the only reason for the House of Lords insisting on this a second time is that its previous attempts to achieve fairness were seen by the Secretary of State to operate unfairly.

The other place has made it clear that it does not trust the system that has operated hitherto — under which there was no opportunity to go to court on a test of unreasonableness. We gave examples where houses and bungalows designed and modified specifically for elderly people, and which met all the factors, were allowed to be sold even though Parliament decided otherwise. That is the problem, and that must be the reason why the House of Lords has insisted on going the whole way.

The Government have raised a deliberate red herring. There is no general threat to elderly people, even to those living in ground floor accommodation in a tower block. Unless such dwellings meet all the factors in law, elderly people will not be deprived of the right to buy.

The argument in the last two years has revolved around 900 applications and 300 exclusions. It is a travesty to talk about 350,000 dwellings, and it does the Minister no justice whatever.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I agree with the Minister that alliance policy would indeed be disastrous for elderly people, particularly on Merseyside, which happens to include Knowsley, North. However, I assure him that my local councils — Lancaster city council and Wyre borough council, which I have the honour of sharing with my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Sir W. Clegg) — will administer these tests fairly, as they have always done, and my elderly constituents will not suffer.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I ought to point out that the amendment that was carried in the other place did not have narrow political support. Had that been so, it would not have been carried. In our discussion last Monday I pointed out that the original amendment had the support of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities — admittedly Labour-controlled — of the Association of District Councils, which is Conservative-controlled, and of all the professional bodies that are concerned with housing. The reason for that degree of all-party support is contained in the reason that the other place has given to the House of Commons for sticking to its guns.

The Lords reason says that, as the Bill left this House on Monday evening, it failed

"to provide adequate safeguards for the stock of local authority rented accommodation specially suitable for people of pensionable age."

It is impossible for this House to dispute that assertion. When the number of elderly people is growing, it is absolutely essential to ensure that an adequate supply of good quality specifically purpose-designed accommodation is provided for them.

I accept the Minister's point that one has to be even-handed. We have to ensure that there is an adequate supply of rented accommodation. But we must also be as sure as we can that the elderly are not unreasonably deprived of their right to buy. I accept that on occasions it is difficult to achieve the correct balance, but the form of the legislation as it left the other place provides a reasonable compromise. The elderly will not be treated differently.

I accept that the Minister made a fair point when he said that we should not adopt a different attitude towards the elderly. Therefore, elderly council tenants who wish to buy should be treated in the same way as other council tenants who wish to buy. Tenants who wish to buy their homes but who believe that they are being treated unfairly or unreasonably by the local authority have the right to take advice and go to court. I do not think that elderly tenants who wish to buy their homes should be treated differently.

The Minister said that local authorities will abuse their position. Some local authorities may do so. In the light of experience, some local authorities will adopt a political view. However, it is hard for some hon. Members to accept that because certain local authorities dislike the right to buy they will act unpleasantly, unreasonably and unjustly for political motives.

We have been told that Ministers who are passionately in favour of the right to buy will act absolutely independently, impartially and justly, without any other motive than the reality and the justice of the case. But Ministers are politicians, too. They are motivated by political concerns. Because of what has happened in the past — the large number of sales and the way in which detailed issues have been dragged into the argument — we are entitled to be suspicious of the suggestion that Ministers are completely impartial and just.

My last point touches on what was said by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). The Minister seemed to be determined to make the worst of a bad situation. He ought to have been more gracious. The gap between us is not nearly so large as he tried to make out in his extremely political and antagonistic speech. He seems to have been told, "If you're going to go down, you'd better go down with all guns firing." The issue is not so important as to lead him to change his normal attitude towards these issues.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): The hon. Gentleman has referred to the gap between the two sides of the House on this issue. We have heard the point of view of the Social Democratic party. Will the hon. Gentleman be asking his Liberal colleague to put the point of view of his party?

Mr. Cartwright: The position of the two parties on housing for the elderly is exactly the same as the position of all those who serve on the organisations to which I referred, including members of the hon. Gentleman's own party who are represented on the Association of District Councils, and all the independent experts who are concerned with housing. The hon. Gentleman should not try to drag political red herrings across this point.

To return to the Minister's determination to extract the last bit of party politics that he can out of this issue, I am sorry that after six years of argument we have not achieved stability. We could have achieved stability on the basis of what was done by the other place, but we have been told that we shall face more uncertainty. At an unspecified future date, the Government intend to legislate again. Instead, therefore, of providing stability for the elderly, the Government have introduced a further threat. It is strange that, on an issue as sensitive as this, a Government of this complexion should be saying that the man in Whitehall knows best.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): It is rare that I should be congratulating the same Minister twice within the space of 48 hours. I hope that the Treasury Whip will note that. Having congratulated the Minister on Monday night for accepting an amendment that redefined homelessness, for reasons which the House accepted and which I do not intend to go into now, the Government's judgment in this respect also is absolutely sound. I expect that all right hon. and hon. Members have received letters from constituents who are anxious to benefit from one or other of the Bill's provisions. It would be wrong, therefore, to jeopardise even slightly the possibility of that legislation passing into law.

I admire my hon. Friend the Minister greatly, but I think that, although I heard what he said about the activities of a number of local authorities, he should look carefully at the way in which the legislation is used by local authorities. He should not prejudge what will happen. He may find that very few authorities are as mendacious as he may fear, in his heart of hearts, they may be, when confronted with this legislation. If very few authorities go against the spirit of the new Act, the House will not want further legislation on this issue. It will be left to my hon. Friend and the Government, as always, to introduce further legislation, should this turn out to be bad law, leading to abuse. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend to keep an open mind.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It is interesting that the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who takes a deep interest in housing matters, should have adopted a different line from a number of other Conservative Members. I assume that it is very different from the line that is taken by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) who will no doubt be trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, the truth is that the Government have surrendered without any grace. In all the circumstances, the other place acted wisely and I have no regrets about the decision that it reached. It will be ironic if the more Right-wing Tories here urge their party to enter the next election with a platform of abolishing the House of Lords. It would be a new twist in British politics, one that we shall watch with considerable interest.

It was interesting to note that the Minister referred almost with contempt to local government and local democracy. He seems to have no confidence in local authorities, even perhaps Conservative-controlled local authorities, in this particular matter. It has already been said that if anybody thinks that a local authority has acted wrongly he can go to court. The ultimate judge, therefore, will not be the local authority. That should be clearly understood.

Many of the elderly constituents understandably want to live in bungalow-type accommodation, especially if it is adapted for use by the elderly. Due, in the main, to the Government's policy, no contracts for local authority housing of any kind in the borough of Walsall have been entered into since 1979. That means of course an ever-lengthening housing queue. If local authorities such as mine had been able to build the type of accommodation which we are discussing, I might have adopted a different attitude to this Lords amendment to which the Government have agreed.

What is important is not whether this type of accommodation should be sold to the sitting tenant, but that local authorities should be able to carry out their housing responsibilites as they did before 1979. Why should they not be able to build much more of this bungalow-type accommodation which is so urgently necessary and many other forms of accommodation, in view of lengthening waiting lists, the position on bed and breakfast accommodation and the scandal of homelessness? The Government have no authority to start lecturing local authorities. Local authorities are asking for the financial means and HIP allocations to carry out their housing responsibilities properly.

I welcome the amendment. It will help in a small way to protect some such accommodation from being sold and, because of Government policy which prevents local authorities from building, I have no regrets about that.

4.30 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): This debate takes place because of what occurred in another place at 23 minutes past 4 o'clock yesterday. There are nearly 1,200 Members of the other place. Yesterday by 148 votes to 124 the other place — *[Interruption.]* I am recounting the plain truth. It is characteristic of Opposition Members to quarrel with the truth, but I shall recount it. We are having this debate because of the decision in another place.

My hon. Friend the Minister advised the House that we should accept the view of another place and the issue

[Mr. Ian Gow]

which the House must decide is whether or not to accept that advice. You will have studied carefully, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have done, the list of those who voted against the Government's advice in another place yesterday afternoon. There was a quarter of bishops—the Bishops of Carlisle, Ely, Rochester and Southwark — and the new recruit to the Social Democratic party, the Duke of Devonshire. They were joined by the former Prime Minister, beloved of Opposition Members, Lord Wilson of Rievaulx.

The view taken by another place was that it is wiser and safer for elderly people who wish to buy the homes in which they live to put their trust in local authorities, including Labour-controlled local authorities, than in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister. That is the essential difference between the view taken by another place and the view taken by this House on Monday.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: No, I shall not give way. I do not wish to make too long a speech or to be led astray by the hon. Gentleman.

Do we believe that the test whether a house or flat is particularly suitable as accommodation for an elderly person will be applied more fairly, impartially and reasonably by the Secretary of State or by certain Labour-controlled district and borough councils?

Mr. Rooker: What about judges?

Mr. Gow: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) says, "What about judges?" He is right that it will be open to an aggrieved tenant to go to court if he seeks to exercise the right to buy but is turned down by his district council on the grounds that the house or flat is especially suitable as accommodation for elderly people. But going to court is a costly and protracted business. It is simply not good enough to say to a tenant and prospective purchaser in that situation, "If you have a capricious, unreasonable, unfair local authority, all you need do is to go to the county court."

As I said in the debate on Monday, when all Secretaries of State and Ministers for Housing have been asked to determine whether a house or a flat falls within the criterion laid down by Parliament, they have taken that decision immensely seriously and have applied their minds conscientiously and fairly to that decision.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: I said earlier that I would not give way.

The amendment that has been insisted on by another place will injure the prospects of fair treatment for elderly people who wish to buy their homes. My hon. Friend the Minister gave his advice to the House with great reluctance and I shall follow his advice with even greater reluctance. The other place is not nearly as closely in touch with the real world and with how matters operate in our constituencies. The other place, out of touch as I believe it to have been on this issue, with four right reverend prelates voting against — [HON. MEMBERS: "Divide the House."] I wish that hon. Gentlemen would listen instead of shouting.

Another place has failed to understand the world as it is. The four right reverend prelates and the noble Duke have not had direct experience, as some of us in this place and on this side of the House have had, of the wishes of elderly people, who should not be penalised simply because they are elderly. Nor have they understood the reality of the deep hostility of some Labour-controlled councils to the concept of the right to buy.

I welcome the assurance by my hon. Friend the Minister that at the first suitable legislative opportunity we shall seek to correct the error made by another place. With even greater reluctance than my hon. Friend, I shall acquiesce in the decision of another place.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We have listened to two of the most ungracious speeches from the present and former Ministers for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction that can have been heard in either House since the legislation was introduced. It comes ill from the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), in the same speech, to complain first that there is a House of Lords making decisions when his party, above all, wants to continue it in its present form, and then that the House of Lords decides that it has more trust in the courts than in the Secretary of State. If the hon. Gentleman is willing to sustain the argument that the courts cannot be trusted, that is certainly a novel development in the Tory party.

Mr. Gow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way.

Mr. Gow *rose*——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way. The hon. Lady has not given way to me on previous occasions.

This matter has come before Parliament as legislation on three occasions. In 1980, when the Government wished to apply similar right-to-buy rules to old people's dwellings as applied elsewhere, their Lordships passed an amendment which then came back to the Commons, and to which the Government proposed a variation that was then passed by this House. That new wording was returned to another place and their Lordships accepted it. Since then, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), my hon. Friends the Members for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), and, in another place, the noble Lord Wigoder, have argued that dwellings for old people should be examined with special care because of the relative shortage of such accommodation.

In 1984, in the Housing and Building Control Act, the Government again attempted to introduce the right to buy for that category of old people. The other place disagreed and passed an amendment which came back to the Commons and was overruled. On that occasion, my noble Friends Lord Evans and Baroness Stedman were part of the group in another place who insisted that they were right, and the Government were defeated by one vote. The Government then proposed a variation that was more accommodating to the views of another place, and it was eventually accepted.

The views and arguments of another place have not become any less strong since then. As my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) said, their Lordships made it clear that they rejected the Government's view because the Commons amendment

failed to provide adequate safeguards for the stock of local authority rented accommodation specially suitable for people of pensionable age. Yesterday was the second occasion on which the issue was debated in another place. This time their Lordships insisted not by a majority of one but, with members of the Labour party, both alliance parties, the Conservative party and the Bishops' Bench — including my local bishop, the Lord Bishop of Southwark—by a majority of 24 that such accommodation needed to be protected.

The reason for such protection is simple. If there was anxiety in 1980 and 1984 about the stock for old people being depleted, there is more anxiety now as there is less stock, more old people and the constraints under which local authorities work are considerably greater.

Mr. Dobson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in coming to the conclusion that they would rather leave discretion with local authorities than with the Secretary of State their Lordships may have borne in mind the fact that the current Secretary of State for Environment, in his previous incarnation as Secretary of State for Transport, was more than once ruled by the courts of this land to have acted irrationally, unreasonably and unlawfully?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman, a fellow London Member, is right. He, I and other hon. Members remember well that many of those matters related to the London Regional Transport Act 1984. There was great controversy over that because the Government originally insisted that there would be no concessionary passes for pensioners, but eventually they were forced to give in.

The arguments put in another place were overwhelming. I sincerely hope that the Government do as the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) suggested and are slightly more graceful and attentive to the arguments, the facts and the realities. I hope that they realise that if they are going to criticise the other place on anything, to criticise their Lordships on something that applies specifically to old people is perhaps inappropriate as, given their average age, their Lordships probably know more about the problems of old age than we do.

Their Lordships were very clear and the Government have, at the end of the day, accepted their decision. It would have been better if the Government had done their research and accepted the overwhelming arguments to protect the interests of old people in the first place. It cannot enhance the Government's prospects of recruiting millions of elderly people to their side when they are so ungracious in eventually accepting that old people's dwellings need special protection.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I quite understand that my hon. Friend the Minister has come to this decision with a pistol at his head. Like my hon. Friends, I fully understand his genuine concern for the feelings of those who would be deprived of the benefits of the Bill if, because of a ping-pong match over this clause, it failed to become law.

However, I welcome what my hon. Friend said today about the possibility of bringing further legislation forward. Together with many of my hon. Friends, I believe that there will be plenty of examples of Socialist authorities looking for every chance to cheat old people out of the opportunity of buying their homes.

It is all very well for my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) to say that if only one or two authorities indulged in such behaviour it should not be necessary to bring legislation forward, but I take the opposite view. If the Conservative party is the party of one nation, the old people in Haringey and Brent deserve the same opportunity to buy their homes as the old people in Conservative-controlled local authorities.

4.45 pm

There are two arguments against the decision of the other place. The first relates to the question of unreasonableness. The example from Socialist authorities of direct labour organisations shows us the direction in which those authorities would go. The convenor of the Association of Direct Labour Organisations — Councillor Senior of Sheffield—said that they are trying to obstruct the law in every way that they can. That is what Socialist authorities are about. I would not put my faith in the reasonableness of Labour or alliance-controlled authorities.

The second major argument against their Lordships' position relates to the remedy. I do not suggest that the courts would be anything but impartial in their interpretation of the law. However, the point is not that they would be impartial, but that people would have to go to the courts in the first place. That would be a lengthy and expensive process. That fact would be used by Socialist authorities to intimidate and deter old people from taking advantage of the right to buy. Not only would those whom their Lordships intended should have that right be unable to buy their own houses, but many others would not attempt to do so through failure to understand where the line was drawn.

I am not surprised that the other place voted as it did. After all, the Peers concerned are all members of the landlord classes. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) reeled off a list of distinguished prelates, and we all know the faults of the Church Commissioners as landlords. He drew our attention to a noble Duke. Of course, the biggest racketeering landlords of all are the Socialist authorities, which have failed to provide service to their tenants and at the same time have sought every opportunity to deprive them of the one thing to which they have looked forward — an end to their serfdom by buying their council houses.

This is a black day for the old people who are tenants of local authorities. I look forward to a brighter day in the near future when my hon. Friend the Minister will bring forward fresh legislation that will enable us to fulfil old people's aspirations as we set out to do in the 1979 manifesto and the 1983 manifesto, and no doubt will in the next manifesto.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I apologise for having missed the earlier part of the debate, but I was elsewhere in the House.

This is a very black day for the constitution. The other place is ill-advised in its action. We have heard the merits of the issue which has been debated. It is the prerogative of the other place to send issues back to this House for reconsideration. I do not believe that it is the other place's prerogative — it is not democratically elected and I cannot foresee a way in which it could be—and nor is it right or proper for it to interfere with the rights of this elected Chamber to introduce proper legislation on the basis of a majority won in a general election.

Opposition Members might well take account of this issue in case they ever form the Government again, though

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

I doubt that they will. The Opposition should take account of what their Lordships have done on this issue and think what such action might do to some of their pet programmes that they wish to foist upon the nation. This is a black day, but every black day and every cloud has a silver lining. The silver lining is, I believe, that it will give yet more power to my hon. Friend's elbow to bring before the House next Session a further housing Bill. Such a Bill is vital and relevant and I look forward to it.

Mr. Rooker: By leave of the House, I should like to make two important points. Because of the extremely unfair and partisan way in which Conservative Members have approached the issue, they seem completely unaware that all over Britain dozens of Conservative-controlled district councils have expressed extreme unease about the way that the Government have operated the rules. Those councils have complained about the loss of housing stock that is especially suitable for the elderly. They are not talking just about general housing for the elderly, and it is not an issue that affects only Labour-controlled local authorities. It affects Conservative-controlled authorities as well, and Government Members would do well to take that on board.

My second point is that every other aspect of the right-to-buy legislation protects every citizen through recourse to the courts. That applies to everything save this one issue. Conservative Members should not say that the concept of going to the courts is rubbish because that remedy is available to most citizens, at any rate for all the rights protected by statute. What is so special about this one narrow issue that it has to be decided by ministerial prerogative? That case has been found wanting in the past.

We shall take on board the castigations delivered by the other place. I was careful in what I said on Monday about the other place because I did not want to upset the noble Lords. I and my hon. Friends share the view that because the noble Lords are not elected the other place is undemocratic. However, it is part of our constitution within which the Labour party seeks to work.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House doth not insist on its disagreement to the Lords amendment.

National Health Service (Amendment) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

New Clause

HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

Lords amendment: No. 1, after clause 1, insert the following new clause—

"—(1) For the purposes of health and safety legislation—

(a) a health authority shall not be regarded as the servant or agent of the Crown, or as enjoying any status, immunity or privilege of the Crown; and

(b) premises used by a health authority shall not be regarded as property of or property held on behalf of the Crown.

(2) In this section—

"health authority"—

(a) as respects England and Wales, has the meaning assigned to it by section 128 of the 1977 Act; and

(b) as respects Scotland, means a Health Board constituted under section 2 of the 1978 Act, the Common Services Agency constituted under section 10 of that Act or a State Hospital Management Committee constituted under section 91 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984; and

"the health and safety legislation" means—

(a) the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the regulations, orders and other instruments in force under it; and

(b) the enactments specified in the third column of Schedule 1 to that Act and the regulations, orders and other instruments in force under those enactments.

(3) Section 125 of the 1977 Act and section 101 of the 1978 Act shall have no effect in relation to any action, liability, claim or demand arising out of the health and safety legislation.

(4) This section shall have no effect in relation to anything done or omitted before its commencement."

4.53 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment Nos. 5 and 7. I should inform the House that these amendments involve privilege.

Mr. Newton: In line with your indication, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of what is acceptable, I should like to speak to amendments Nos. 5 and 7. In doing so I hope to restore that happy sense of harmony and unanimity in the House in response to our dealings with another place. Those dealings were rudely sullied by those hon. Members who spoke on the Housing and Planning Bill. In this case I hope that there will be agreement between both sides of the House about what I am recommending — the warm acceptance of a number of amendments made in another place to some aspects of the Bill.

Amendment No. 1 is a new clause inserted in another place together with some tidying up amendments that were inserted by the Government towards the end of proceedings in another place. The amendment seeks to remove from health authorities Crown immunity in respect of health and safety legislation, in the same way as clause 1 of the original Bill removed it in respect of food legislation.

In its new form, it defines the health authorities affected and the legislation, but it does not contain regulation-making powers originally envisaged in the amendment moved in another place. That is simply because it turned out to be unnecessary to have such powers, as they are already available in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The application of the clause in its broader form is limited to events occurring after its commencement and applies in the same way as clause 1 of the original Bill about food legislation.

We have taken a further significant step in the legislation about Crown immunity affecting health authorities. We have gone significantly beyond the original proposal which, as the House will recall, arose in the aftermath of the Stanley Royd hospital inquiry into the outbreak of food poisoning. We have gone significantly beyond the Government's decision at that time to remove Crown immunity from food legislation, and we accept the argument put forward in the other place that that removal should also apply to health and safety at work legislation.

It might have been more difficult to say that at a much earlier stage, but now it seems to be an entirely sensible move and I welcome it. It represents a concordat not just between this House and another place, but also between the Government and those Opposition Members who expressed anxiety about the position. It is a useful piece of further progress and I hope that it will receive enthusiastic or at least warm-hearted support from hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The other two amendments are technical. Amendment No. 5 provides for clause 1 in the food legislation and Lords amendment No. 1 in the health and safety legislation to commence operation three months after the date on which the Act is passed. That short delay is necessary to allow health authorities to be advised of the changes in the law and in working procedures and to enable them to undertake any necessary training. As will be readily apparent to hon. Members who have looked at amendment No. 7, it simply extends the long title of the Bill to reflect the insertion of the new clause on the wider removal of Crown immunity. It provides cover within the long title of the Bill for Lords amendment No. 1.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): This is a bad day for cockroaches, because it sees the extension of the health and safety legislation to all hospitals and properties of health authorities. This bad day for cockroaches comes about because the Government were outvoted in the other place. We are being asked to agree with the Lords in the said amendment. The Opposition certainly agree with the Lords because we earlier moved amendments on the same lines. We suggested them on Second Reading and moved amendments in Committee and on Report, but the Government used the Whips to vote them down. I suspect that we are happier supporting the amendment than are Ministers—or, perhaps I should say happier than their predecessors would have been had they remained in office long enough to carry out the duties being undertaken by the present Ministers.

It must be re-emphasised that hospitals are supremely dangerous places. They are full of germs and viruses, dangerous drugs and dangerous waste. Patients are especially susceptible to infection because they are ill and in need of special protection. The people who work in hospitals and people visiting patients need similar protection. Until the Lords exercised its force majeure, the Government did not intend to do anything to help. They intended to keep Crown immunity for health and safety offences and they lifted it only from kitchens. That was a daft compromise because the well-informed cockroach faced with the Government proposal could simply move from the kitchen to the operating theatre in order to be in a safer environment.

Crown immunity has never been advocated in order that there should be more prosecutions. Nobody is enthusiastic about lawyers making money out of this proposition. Personally, I am not enthusiastic about lawyers making money out of anything. But the object of the exercise is that the threat of prosecution should force health authorities to take their obligations more seriously. The Association of Environmental Health Officers sent the DHSS a report on 1,000 hospital kitchens that had been inspected. Apparently, 60 per cent. of them, more than 600, had been in breach of regulations, and 97 of them would have been prosecuted if that power had been in the hands of the proper authorities.

5 pm

But we are now going beyond kitchen hygiene, to applying the full rigours of the law on health and safety. The Government were very complacent in claiming that the law was operating even though prosecutions were not possible. Lord Young sent a letter to Mr. David Basnett, then general secretary of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, on 27 November 1985, which said:

"The Commission tell me that the Health and Safety Executive have looked carefully into the eight cases which you put forward relating to the operation of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. In three of these cases, the Executive were unable to substantiate your evidence. Two of these involved alleged exposure to asbestos. They did confirm however that in four of the five cases the Health and Safety Executive would have prosecuted under the Act were it not for Crown immunity."

That suggests that when that union sent a list of eight cases, 50 per cent. of even that small number would have resulted in prosecutions if that possibility had existed.

I do not want to detain the House, but certain points now need to be put to Ministers, as we are for the first time facing the extension of health and safety legislation. The extension of the power to prosecute and the necessary response from health authorities will cost a lot of money. It was estimated that it would cost £600,000 to do up the kitchens at the Stanley Royd hospital to a proper standard. The health authority across the river estimates that it would cost no less than £1·5 million to do up the kitchens at St. Thomas's hospital. But these figures refer merely to applying the food hygiene legislation. In the time available, we have not had an opportunity to obtain estimates on how much it will cost health authorities to meet the health and safety legislation. But it is clear that it will cost tens of millions of pounds, in addition to the £100 million or so for extending the food hygiene legislation.

Before deciding whether to support the amendment, we need to know whether the Government have estimated the costs that will arise from it. If so, what additional funds do the Government propose to provide to health authorities so that they can protect themselves from prosecution? It is no good any Minister, new or old, saying that such a sum will be allowed for in next year's Estimates, so that hon. Members will not be able to indentify it. Similarly, Ministers cannot say that it is all

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

right, because that spending has already been allowed for in this year's allocation. This legislation has only just come from the other place, but it will be implemented in this financial year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): We are, of course, looking at clause 2, which refers not so much to kitchens as to other Health Service premises such as laboratories. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the large sums spent by many health authorities in the 1970s as a result of the Howie report on laboratory conditions? The health authority that I served on was obliged to spend a lot of money on bringing laboratories up to very high standards.

Mr. Dobson: Perhaps some health authority laboratories are of a high standard, but not long ago I was told by the consultant in charge of the laboratories at Worcester royal infirmary that the place was full of dangerous pathogens which were a threat to the staff, and that they broke practically every health and safety regulation in the land. Indeed, he subsequently resigned because he was so perturbed about it. Hospitals consist of much more than laboratories, and there are many places within hospitals that have come nowhere near meeting the requirements of the health and safety legislation.

If the amendment is accepted, the legislation will come into operation on 5 or 6 February 1987, which is in this financial year. Health authorities will break the law if they do not put right before then anything that is wrong now. I know that clause 1(8) says

"This section shall have no effect in relation to anything done or omitted before its commencement",

but if the law is not being complied with on the day that this part of the Bill comes into operation, the law will be broken. Health authorities will be open to prosecution for anything wrong from that day onwards.

What efforts have Ministers or their predecessors made to ensure that the 97 kitchens that would have been open to prosecution according to the list submitted by the AEHO are brought up to standard? Have Ministers guaranteed those health authorities earmarked funds in order to meet the requirements before 5 or 6 February? If not, can the Minister be joined as a defendant if the health authority is prosecuted? After all, Ministers will have knowingly failed to allocate the sums necessary to ensure that health authorities comply with the law.

Perhaps Ministers are still covered by Crown immunity, even if health authorities are not. If Ministers do not come up with the funds, it may be to their advantage to be covered by Crown immunity, because any sensible health authority would attempt to join them in defending any action. What will the impact be on all those shifty private contractors who moved into the cleaning business? All over the country official reports produced by the health authorities who were forced to bring in those contractors have mentioned substandard cleaning targets and have said that targets have not been met. In one month last year Office Cleaning Services at Addenbrooke's hospital approached only 65 per cent. of the target standard of cleanliness in the operating theatres there. The truth is that standards have declined as privatisation has increased. The reports produced by health authorities provide evidence of that all over the country.

Health authorities that fall foul of the health and safety legislation as a result of contractors being imposed on them by ministerial fiat along with lower standards, because Ministers are not providing the necessary funds, will no doubt wish to join Ministers in defending any action brought against them by the Health and Safety Executive.

I congratulate all those involved in the campaign to remove Crown immunity. Ministers stood out against this sensible proposition, but it is now acknowledged as being eminently sensible by the new Minister. The Health Service trade unions conducted a long campaign. In recent years, the AEHO also played a major part in the campaign as did the Royal College of Nursing and the British Medical Association.

I pay particular tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for his constant harassment of Ministers, and anyone else in his sights. Agreement is almost universal that Crown immunity should be lifted in full. We in the House of Commons should have made the decision ourselves. That would have led to a more efficient use of parliamentary time. It should have been accepted when first put forward. We won the arguments but lost the votes. Now it looks as though we shall win the votes as well.

On a sad and serious note: but for the outbreak of salmonella poisoning and the deaths which followed at Stanley Royd hospital, none of these changes would have been proposed by the Government. One of my hon. Friends lost a relative in that outbreak. Nothing can bring back those who died, but many of the people involved will gain some satisfaction from the thought that as a result of what happened measures are, at long last, being taken which should reduce the possibility of another such outbreak.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Minister for Health made as good a job as possible out of a very weak case. He tried to assert that the Government are in favour of the proposed amendments, although any reading of the debates in another place shows that only a few weeks ago the Government were against the amendments. Ministers spoke out very strongly indeed against them. The Minister tried to put his best face on it. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has just made a powerful speech in which he made a number of points that must be answered. I hope that the Minister for Health, or his sidekick, will respond.

For all the diplomacy shown by the Minister — he should go to the Foreign Office — this is the one hundredth crippling and embarrassing defeat for the Government. It is a significant defeat. The amendments are a landmark in the battle to erase Crown immunity from the face of all establishments where it now reigns. The Government's acceptance of the amendments is very reluctant.

Cash must now be found. The Minister's speech must be followed by the provision of abundant money. These are not cheap amendments. They will cost many millions of pounds. We cannot prevent accidents and protect the safety of Health Service workers for nothing.

The campaign began with John Edmonds of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union and the deputation which I took to the Secretary of State for Employment on 18 June 1985. Since then early-day motions and parliamentary questions have been

tabled. The Minister said that the amendments go further than the original proposition. He is not quite right. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has played a leading part in the campaign and will agree that throughout we have always demanded the removal of both food hygiene and health and safety regulations from Crown immunity. We were all disappointed that only kitchens were included at the beginning. That was the thin end of the wedge. We have made it clear that we are seeking wide extension of the removal of Crown immunity. The bodies involved in the campaign include the environmental health officers, the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing. Their efforts laid the basis for success.

5.15 pm

If anyone doubts the need for the change he should check parliamentary answers, which show a 20-fold difference in the incidence of health and safety enforcement notices between Crown and non-Crown premises. That shows the need for the amendments.

It is imperative that the new law be enforced. The quota system for disabled workers is often not enforced. The Minister knows that, as a former Minister responsible for the disabled. We shall fight to ensure that this new law is enforced because if it is not it will be brought into disrepute. We give notice to the Government that when the amendments are accepted and the Bill enacted we shall demand enforcement of the law.

Although the proposed change goes further than the Government originally accepted, it is only the beginning. Much more remains to be done. Even when the Bill is enacted, over 10,000 Government premises will still be protected by Crown immunity from food and hygiene regulations and from health and safety regulations.

We want the removal of Crown immunity to be extended to such places as prisons, defence establishments, Department of Health and Social Security offices and Ministry of Defence kitchens.

A fortnight ago I visited the forces in West Germany and I pay tribute to what the Ministry of Defence is doing, but I want Crown immunity to be removed from Ministry of Defence kitchens. I shall press for that. This anachronism should be swept away.

This is only the second step. The first step was kitchens. The second step is these amendments. We shall press for the new law to be implemented and then we shall press for the law to be extended to all the areas which I have mentioned.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I agree with the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) that the amendments are only the first step. I endorse what the Government have done and I warmly welcome the extension of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act provisions. I agree with the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South that we should now consider some other opportunities to remove Crown immunity. Initially I was not prepared to be as ambitious as the right hon. Gentleman, although I agree with him in principle.

I have looked at reports of the debates in the other place relating to the amendment and the extension of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. I was concerned that the health and safety at work provisions covering waste, medical, nursing, dental, veterinary, pharmaceutical and other practices, as well as human and animal tissue, excretions, drugs, medical and medicinal products, swabs, dressings and similar items, are included and are therefore changed in so far as the amendment affects the Bill.

What worries me is that large areas with a slightly wider extension start to impinge on the provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Some of the latter overlap the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Debates in another place on the amendment suggested to me that the noble Lord Ennals, who introduced the amendment, thought in his original drafting that the conclusions of the 11th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, asking for a review of wider issues such as incineration, fencing and other matters relating more directly to pollution, would be covered by the amendment. However, from a strict reading of the amendment and the Bill, I understand that unhappily, that will not happen as a result of the Government's acceptance of the amendment. I ask the Government to look at that and to reconsider the recommendations of the 11th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution as soon as possible.

However, I welcome the amendment unreservedly as a step forward. I should also like to underline the comments of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). It would be remiss if the House did not cross-examine the Minister a little more about how he and his Department will cope with the undoubtedly increased demands, whether financial or administrative, which have been visited upon them. I accept that they may not have been able to work out the fine detail of the circulars and the guidance that they will give, but the Minister is obliged to give us a little more information about how he proposes to implement the Bill, and what will happen in practice in February next year when the provisions start to bite.

References were made in the other place to newspaper reports that a certain amount of leeway would be allowed to health authorities in that replies could be made within 28 days, and that they would be able to plead poverty as a defence against proceedings or notices that may be raised against them. The Minister should comment on that because it concerns my hon. Friends and me. The costs of implementing the provision may well be substantial but they must be faced.

Another difference between the noble Lord Ennals' proposals and our discussions this afternoon is the inclusion in the noble Lord's amendment affecting regulation powers. Those powers have been deleted in the amendment. The Minister may be able to tell us that perfectly adequate provisions exist under present legislation and that, therefore, the regulation powers are not necessary. I hope that that is the case, and that the Government are not trying in some way to emasculate the Lords amendment.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I can clear up that point by a brief intervention. The hon. Gentleman may have missed what I said when opening the debate. The powers had been left out, as they were already contained in the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the Minister. I suspected that that was the case and apologise if I did not catch the Minister's earlier remarks.

The general thrust of the amendment is acceptable to us. It is the first stage in what I hope the Minister will

[Mr. Kirkwood]

accept as a continuing march towards a more open and less protectionist environment within which Government Departments operate. I warmly endorse what the Government are doing and they are supported in this by myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) commented in passing—I think that all hon. Members will pay tribute to him for his work on this matter—that the Government have come, rather reluctantly, to this position. I can tell my right hon. Friend that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner coming to repentance than over 99 who need no repentance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) made a powerful speech. The amendment is really a long-stop. The points made by my hon. Friends underline the fact that by removing Crown immunity a situation arises where, if things go wrong, a penalty will be incurred. However, things ought not to go wrong. I am pleased that we have at least got this far. It used to be possible for employees to gain severe damages in the courts if their ears had been damaged because of inadequate controls over the level of decibels to which they were subjected. It was not until heavy damages were awarded by a court against a company that there was a tremendous change in the level of decibels allowed under Common Market legislation, and also in the way in which the problem was dealt with in this country.

I rejoice that it is a long-stop. However, the amendment should concentrate the minds of authorities, administrators and, under the Griffiths arrangements, the new general managers a little more upon the important points made regarding the health and safety of people in hospitals.

A case in point is hepatitis B, which was such a disaster in renal dialysis units and which led to deaths of nurses in Edinburgh. Without the provision that we are now discussing, authorities have tightened up, and safety procedures are automatically in place in renal dialysis units. This means that the incidence of hepatitis B has been virtually eliminated. However, the danger is there and the fact that the new amendment will enable the regulations to be tightened up will be of some value.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras referred to the damage caused by privatisation. When the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Services inherited the file from her predecessor, she will have seen long correspondence from me about what happened when Crothalls and Pritchards were the cleaners at Westminster hospital. She will also have received the report by the Riverside health authority. I hate to bring personal matters into this, but my wife was the unfortunate person who had to scrub out the lavatory because it was unhygienic. Nothing concentrates a Member of Parliament's mind upon cleanliness more than having to take into a hospital the necessary cleaning equipment to ensure that infection does not set in. Sadly, I have to report that on a second operation my wife got a further infection from precisely the same origin. The nurses and all the staff concerned naturally had sterilised gloves and instruments, but the bath and toilet facilities were rife with infection.

With privatisation monitoring is very loose. Previously a ward sister was in charge of her ward and was the captain of a tight ship. As a result of privatisation, she has to go through a number of procedures in relation to cleanliness, food and laundry before she can obtain satisfaction and the right standards of cleanliness.

Following the acceptance of this excellent additional safeguard, will the Minister look at the mechanisms whereby we can arrive at a position where Crown immunity will not have to be dispensed with because problems will not arise? At the moment, the proverbial coach and horses can be driven through the method of monitoring cleanliness in public places, wards and out-patients' departments. That applies in particular to geriatric hospitals, where the problem of incontinence arises and laundry is put out to outside contractors who do not have the same standards as a hospital hygiene officer.

In the light of this debate, those procedures should be revamped and revised. As a good Labour party member for more years than I care to remember, I never thought that I would thank the good Lord for the House of Lords. However, as in so many cases these days, we are most grateful for what happens in the other place, which enables the Government to concentrate their minds on a reform that has been long overdue.

5.30 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On Second Reading of the National Health Service (Amendment) Bill, which followed a Bill that had been sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and others, including myself, we were given some dispensation over Crown immunity as a result of the outbreak of food poisoning at the Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield. On Second Reading, some of us, including myself, suggested that it would be helpful if that immunity were extended to hospital premises and activities other than those purely in respect of food poisoning. It seemed clear that it would be difficult to determine where an outbreak had begun and ended, to make sure that people were properly and consistently protected, and that the Crown could not fall back on what in the event would turn out to be a spurious immunity. We wanted further protection for the patients in a given hospital.

In my constituency of Stafford we had the terrible tragedy of legionnaires disease which caused the death of 37 people. The cause of that has been partially reported on by a public inquiry for which I called and which I was delighted the Government agreed to set up. During the course of that inquiry it became apparent that there was defective machinery and that cooling towers needed to be replaced. They have now been replaced and for that we are extremely grateful to the Minister, the Government and the regional health authority. That has, so far as can be judged, ensured that such a tragedy will not recur in my constituency.

On one occasion I was sitting with members of the press who had gathered for a press conference. Although they did not know it at the time, every person in the room—representatives from virtually every newspaper in Britain—was liable to catch legionnaires disease because at that time nobody knew the cause of the outbreak. Therefore, there was a serious risk to a large number of people.

I welcome the amendment. I appreciate that the scope of the Bill precludes the extension of the abolition of Crown immunity to matters outside NHS hospitals. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister for not being here when he opened the debate. I regret that I was caught up in another meeting. However, I feel strongly that these provisions are of great importance. They go a long way to removing, for practical purposes, many of the difficulties that can arise in hospitals. The health and safety legislation is extremely broad. It covers a wide range of activities. As time goes on, it will be discovered that the amendment goes a lot further than many people may have thought in the first instance.

In 1978, the Health and Safety Executive wrote a report on Crown immunity and required the Government to abolish Crown immunity in a wide range of matters. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is well aware of that report. However, we are dealing here with the NHS and the Government have properly gone as far as they can in this legislation. I congratulate Ministers, not only on what the Government have done in respect of this legislation, but on their many achievements since they took office.

I should particularly like to thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for coming to Stafford recently to see the hospital in action in the aftermath of the terrible rail crash tragedy on the outskirts of Stafford. Many people in that hospital expressed deep appreciation for the time and care that she spent, which helped enormously to restore confidence in the hospital in the aftermath of the legionnaires tragedy.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The hon. Gentleman must get the record right. First, it is not the Government who have seen the light. That was forced upon them by the other place. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman might care to explain why he voted against the Bill on Report.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is making a fairly cheap point. At that time we had every reason to suppose that we had gone a long way towards achieving the principle of the abolition of Crown immunity in respect of health authority legislation. The reality is that at that time we had got as much out of the Government as we had hoped for. We wanted more. We expected that in due course we would get more, and in private discussions it was suggested that we might well get more. Therefore, it would have been churlish at that point not to have accepted what was on offer.

The hon. Gentleman may be prepared to concede, if he is good enough to look at my speech on Second Reading, that I called for an extension of the abolition of Crown immunity. Furthermore, that was taken up by the House of Lords and the provisions that we are discussing today mirror exactly the provisions for which I called, which were as much as could have been provided for within the scope of the Bill. I have no reason whatever to complain, and it is churlish of the hon. Gentleman to deny the Government credit for accepting the amendment. We are used to reasonable debating points and I do not deny the hon. Gentleman credit for trying to make one, but the trouble is that he is failing.

The real point here is that the Government are already in a dialogue with the other place on the consideration of Lords amendments. I was a member of the Committee which considered 589 amendments to the Financial Services Bill and it is by no means unusual for the Government to be given credit for accepting amendments.

Mr. Maxton: Does the hon. Gentleman seriously believe that if the other place had considered the Bill three months ago, which would have given the Government time to return to the House with the clause that we are now considering and still have time to reject it and return it to the other place before prorogation, it would not have rejected it?

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has been congratulated on allowing sufficient time to enable the Government to see the wisdom of the amendment. The Government deserve to be congratulated on the way in which they have dealt with this matter.

The problem of viral hepatitis was raised quite properly by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt). When the application of the exemptions to health and safety legislation are fully understood, having regard to section 4 of the 1974 Act, it will be appreciated that it is not confined to matters such as viral hepatitis B, which is a serious disease, and embraces the problems of AIDS. The Minister may or may not wish to comment at this stage, but he will know that there is an early-day motion in my name and the names of about 90 other hon. Members of all parties that calls for better provision for education about AIDS through television.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Question is whether the House should accept the amendment.

Mr. Cash: Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker. Where matters were to arise in which AIDS was known to have been transmitted within the context of the health and safety legislation—in other words, there being grounds under the 1974 Act for someone to sue the Crown because AIDS had been contracted—I believe that the Bill's provisions would be of considerable benefit to any potential litigants.

Mr. Dobson: Surely people have always been able to bring civil actions against health authorities, or any part of the NHS, in circumstances which might result in death or illness.

Mr. Cash: I am not disputing that there are circumstances in which a person would be able to set up a claim for damages where AIDS or any other disease had been transmitted through the use of facilities of an NHS hospital. I am saying that the basis on which it could be done is being widened. It is extremely important that the public should know that the Government are dealing with the problem of AIDS, among other things, extremely seriously. I think that I have dealt sufficiently with the issues that I wish to raise, and I wish finally to congratulate Ministers on everything that they have done to ensure that the Bill is enacted.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): I shall take only a few minutes of the time of the House. I wish to contribute to the debate because I spoke on Second Reading and I was a member of the Committee which considered the Bill. In Committee I argued the case for the extension of clause 1 into other areas. I was interested to learn how the Government could continue to prop up a system that is logically indefensible, and it seems that they have sought to make virtue out of necessity. When I read the final speech of defence from the Government's spokesman in another place, Baroness Trumpington, I noticed that she fell back on the argument that the voluntary procedures had worked well over the years. Indeed, the Crown notice system has worked well, and from the system's inception

[Mr. Ken Weetch]

about 330 notices have been issued. In every instance there was ready compliance and none of them had to be referred to the Secretary of State.

5.45 pm

I have no sympathy with anyone who would wish to resist the amendment and I have some sympathy with one or two of the remarks that were made in another place. Since the health and safety at work legislation was placed on the statute book, there has been accumulated a good deal of experience of putting safety legislation into operation in hospitals throughout the country. When I telephoned East Anglia this morning to brief myself on what is happening in the area, I was pleased to learn that the local health authority has become much more safety-conscious in recent years. This is because shop stewards and management have worked hard to identify and pinpoint matters of concern. In so doing they have eradicated many of the problems, and that is an encouraging feature to note. Much hard work has been done thoughout the country.

About 96 per cent. of the speech which I prepared will have to be abandoned, to my relief as well as everyone else's, because of what has transpired. I constructed an elaborate argument which I called Morton's fork. It went something like this: if the situation is serious, the Government will have to do something about it because it is serious; if there has been a good deal of improvement, it will not cost the Government very much to act accordingly, so they can very well take the appropriate action.

I do not think that there will be a rush of litigation. I discern that there is much good will on the part of those who are involved in the problems that we are discussing. Tribute should be paid to trade unions and management for the way that they have co-operated in many areas. I conclude by saying that the Minister's statement at the beginning of the debate should be welcomed in all parts of the House.

Mr. Newton: I am pleased that the debate is coming towards its end in slightly happier terms than when it was introduced by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) at the outset. I hesitate to describe the manner of his introductory remarks as his characteristic charm. They contained a degree of abrasiveness which I thought went beyond the tone that I had hoped to set in introducing the debate on behalf of the Government.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) must be one of the most reasonable of hon. Members—I hope that this will not be a killer blow to him—on both sides of the House. I can see from the expression of Labour Members that that is regarded as a fatal charge. In an important respect, the hon. Gentleman has given the answer to some of the rhetoric of a rather routine character with which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras sought to embellish his speech. He suggested, for example, that the problem is yet another one that can be solved only by the Government finding a large and unspecified sum to be thrown at it.

The Government's view is exactly that which was set out in the concluding remarks of the hon. Member for Ipswich. No one can pretend that everything is perfect —if it were, we would not be bothering to have this debate — but there is no reason to doubt that most health authorities have responded to the pressures of the Crown notice system and successive waves of guidance and have made substantial progress towards improving the position that obtained a decade ago. If that were not the position, and if I were to respond to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras in the terms he used, I should be tempted to ask what the previous Labour Government thought they were doing in 1977 when they allowed cockroaches, to take up the hon. Gentleman's phrase, to continue having their field day for another decade without seeking to take the action that is now being urged.

Mr. Dobson *rose*—

Mr. Cash *rose*—

Mr. Newton: I shall give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that the report which was produced by the Health and Safety Executive in 1978 came at a time when the then Labour Government could have taken the appropriate action, which they refused to do?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend reinforces my argument. Out of courtesy, I should let the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras have his say.

Mr. Dobson: I cannot expect the Minister to plough through the previous debates on this matter but, had he done so, he would have noted that my view is that the Labour Government were wrong in their judgment at the time. They introduced what they regarded as an improvement in the system, which, until this year, the present Government regarded as adequate. Ministers are on record as saying so, despite mounting evidence that it was not satisfactory. That mounting evidence was not available to the last Labour Government, although I think that they misjudged the matter at the time.

Mr. Newton: In view of the entirely generous acknowledgement by the hon. Gentleman of his views of the action of the Labour Government, I do not wish to pursue this point further. We are now back on the track that I hoped we could have stayed on. We all now recognise that in certain important respects, of which the most obvious was food legislation — we have now extended acceptance to health and safety legislation — the previous situation could not be regarded as entirely satisfactory. It is right to have made these moves. They are now represented in the combination of what the Government put into the Bill in the first place and what they have accepted in response to continuing pressure, including that in the other place in the past few days, which I put before the House at the outset in welcoming terms.

There was a reference to repenting sinners in one of the more jocular contributions to the debate. Neither my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang)—whom I should not wish to call a sinner in any case, nor I can conceivably be described as sinners in this context because we were metaphorically unborn at the time.

Mr. Dobson: The first words of the financial memorandum of the Bill, as originally published in April this year, state:

"Clause 1 had no implications for public expenditure."

The Bill as drafted did not extend the lifting of Crown

immunity to health and safety legislation as a whole. Does the Minister still say that the rigorous application of health and safety legislation and the liability to prosecution will not cost a penny? That is what the Bill states.

Mr. Newton I am saying no more than was said by the hon. Member for Ipswich in the last speech from the Back Benches.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend did not say that no extra money was needed.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Ipswich specifically referred to health and safety legislation rather than to food legislation. He said that as a result of the activities of trade unions, to which he rightly paid tribute, and the seriousness with which the 1977 changes had been taken by health authorities, substantial progresss had been made in respect of health and safety requirements. It is on that basis that I, too, wish to say that there is no reason to suppose——

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend did not say that no extra money was needed.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Ipswich specifically expressed doubt whether large sums of money were needed, on the basis that he thought that significant progress had already been made. In that respect, there is total unanimity between the hon. Member for Ipswich and myself from the neighbouring county of Essex. That is our view of the position.

Mr. Kirkwood: I wonder whether we could put the question the other way around. Supposing an unforeseen problem arises and money is required to comply with the provisions of the new amendment. What view will the Government take? Does the Department expect the local health authority, whatever it may be and in whatever context it finds itself, to find the money from its existing budget?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will understand that I am not prepared to be drawn into speculation about hypothetical situations of that kind beyond saying that, in the Government's view, the amount of money spent on the National Health Service ought reasonably be expected to be sufficient to ensure reasonably clean kitchens and reasonably safe working practices. In the first instance, should a problem of that kind occur, we would expect it to be examined by the district health authority — if necessary, in co-operation or discussion with the regional health authority—before it was suggested that the only way in which it could be overcome was by some further substantial sum of public money being found.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) referred to the Control of Pollution Act 1974. He has sought to raise this point in various ways, and I recognise that it might be worthy of consideration in the longer term. He will understand that we have sought in a pragmatic way to meet those problems which had clearly been revealed as carrying a degree of urgency and proper public concern and to respond to continuing discussion in both House about other aspects. None of that rules out further changes in future. Equally, I must say, for the benefit of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), that it cannot be taken as committing us to further changes in the future, still less to my committing my colleagues in other Departments to a certain view of parallel problems. I note the point raised by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. I do not dismiss it out of hand, but it is manifestly not a matter with which we can deal by further legislative change at this stage.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) urged us to ensure that the mechanisms for avoiding any consequences arising from the removal of Crown immunity in these respects are applied. I agree with him. Indeed, one point that did not emerge during this debate —it lent a slightly artifical flavour to some comments is that it was clear from the Stanley Royd inquiry that the primary failure was that of hospital management to manage well. Whether we have Crown immunity or no Crown immunity, Crown notice systems or local environmental health officers crawling all over the place, if management is not equipped to manage hospitals properly, whether in respect of catering or cleaning, things will go wrong.

One thing that I hope will unite all hon. Members is the need —we all expect that these proposals will create a little pressure — for good quality management of the provision of these services and the application of proper standards, whatever the law may be. We are seeking to achieve that by a variety of means.

Mr. Ashley: Although the Minister said that he could not commit himself to further legislation, may we take it that he would be favourably disposed to extending the abolition of Crown immunity?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman and I have known each other long enough to know the terms in which we conduct these exchanges. I will not attempt further to interpret for him the demeanour I have sought to show at the Dispatch Box. I shall leave him to draw his own conclusions from the way in which I have approached the subject.

Mr. Pavitt: The Minister, when responding to a comment I made, said that the mechanisms should be applied. That is not the point I made. My point was that the present mechanisms are inadequate. I asked him to revise the mechanisms in the light of the new situation that has developed in the past three years. I asked the Minister to look at the mechanisms and at the gap between present monitoring in certain areas in the ward and possible monitoring to ensure that the mechanisms are effective.

Mr. Newton: Essentially, the hon. Gentleman described in different terms what I meant by management. It is a responsibility of management to ensure that proper standards, and in particular those standards required by legislation, are applied. That process sometimes involves monitoring—it can involve various processes—but it is certainly a responsibility and function of management. If management is not operating well, we shall not achieve the objective. I do not think there is anything between the hon. Gentleman and myself on this point.

I regret that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford was not present when the debate started and that my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) was not able to be here either. Now that they are present, I am able to pay tribute to the part they played in this argument over many months. I express my gratitude to them and to other hon. Members on both sides of the House for the way in which they have welcomed the

[Mr. Newton]

proposals in their different ways, even if they have not entirely congratulated the Government on the proposals that we hope will shortly become law.

Question put and agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Clause 2

PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 4, line 27, at end insert—

"(5) The regulations shall be so framed as to preclude—

(a) a person included in a list published under subsection (2)*(a)* above; and

(b) an employee of such a person;

from taking part in the decision whether an application such as is mentioned in subsection (2)*(c)* above should be granted or an appeal against such a decision brought by virtue of subsection (4) above should be allowed.".".

6 pm

Mr. Newton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 3.

Mr. Newton: I think that the House is familiar with the background to the amendments in terms of the Government's general propositions on changes in pharmacy contract arrangements and the provisions in the original Bill. The amendments reflect the further consideration of views expressed in another place on the right role for contractor pharmacists, both in family practitioner sub-committees which will make decisions on applications for new NHS pharmacy contracts and in the bodies which will hear any appeals against those decisions. The effect of the amendments is to confine the right to take decisions on new pharmacy contract applications to those members of sub-committees or appeal body members who are not already in possession of, or employees benefiting from, an existing NHS pharmacy contract.

I should say in making clear this change in the decision-making process—the voting position—that we are not intending or suggesting in the amendments any alteration in the size of the sub-committee or the appeal body, which in both cases will remain at six members plus a lay chairman. There will be three non-pharmacist members and three pharmacy members, of whom one should be a non-contractor pharmacist. However, the two contractor pharmacists will now play only an advisory role. They will not vote on applications and, indeed, will be required to withdraw from the proceedings before the sub-committee or the appeal body reaches its decision on the application.

The third of the three pharmacy members, at both levels, who will not be an existing contract holder, will be appointed from a list of nominees provided by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain—as the ethical body for the whole profession—from branches of the profession other than community pharmacy. I must make it clear that the amendments do not preclude that third pharmacist — the non-contractor pharmacist — from having a vote or from taking part in the final decision on applications. As my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State made clear in the other place, the Government will consider further whether it would be right for this third non-contractor pharmacist to be purely advisory or whether he or she should be part of the decision-taking membership. We shall make an appropriate provision one way or the other in the regulations to be made under this clause once the Bill is enacted.

I hope that on this rather tangled subject I shall carry the House with me in recognising that the amendments placed in the Bill in the other place by the Government meet a major anxiety expressed not only in the other place but in this place at certain earlier stages of the proceedings to exclude from actual decisions on new applications for contracts those who, whether rightly or wrongly, might be thought to have a vested interest in the outcome. We have concluded in the light of consideration that this is the right course and that the decision-making structure which we now envisage will fairly reflect the interests of local communities in the provision of new NHS pharmacy services and a pharmacy in its wider professional sense. Contractor pharmacists will remain involved to offer advice from their own perspective on local pharmaceutical needs. That advice will no doubt be seen as important and valuable, but contractor pharmacists will not, in the end, be able to take part in the actual decisions that are made once that advice has been given.

I should like to make clear our intentions towards regulations. We intend to clarify the composition of the FPC sub-committees and the appeal bodies which will deal with applications for new pharmacies. In the first place, we intend to exclude dispensing doctors from partipation, for reasons which I think will be obvious. Secondly, we intend to ensure that no more than one of the three non-pharmacy voting member positions can be filled by any single family practitioner committee contractor profession other than pharmacy. In other words, we intend to make sure that no more than one of those places can be filled by, for example, a non-dispensing doctor or a dentist. The aim is to ensure that the interests of the consumer will be still further strengthened and that the withdrawal of the contractor pharmacists' votes will not create a problem of balance between the different contracting professions. We seek a fairly delicate balance, as I suspect any hon. Member who has ever had cause to look into this problem will realise, and we think that we have probably got it about right in these proposals. I would not wish to pretend that I think that that view will be unanimously held by all those concerned with this difficult matter.

Mr. Weetch: If, in the course of time, this elaborate structure which the Minister has built up is found not to work or to work in an unsatisfactory way, will he not hesitate to intervene again, identify the problem and put it right at a later stage?

Mr. Newton: In the light of my experience of this subject in the past two months since I became Minister for Health, I can certainly say that I should hesitate to intervene again, but I say that in a slightly jocular spirit. Of course, if it turned out that these arrangements did not fulfil the objectives set for them or in some way they proved unsatisfactory, I would be prepared, as one who is, I hope, a reasonably sensible and pragmatic man, to look at them again. We believe that, as matters stand, this is a reasonable balance to have struck, which will work in fulfilment of the objectives set.

Our assessment remains that the FPC sub-committees and appeal bodies as now constituted will take responsible and informed decisions which balance the National Health

Service's interest and the taxpayer's interest in restraining NHS pharmacy costs with the need for good local access to services. We certainly would not have accepted further changes that diverted us from those long-term objectives.

As I have said, it is a difficult and delicate balance in view of the differences between some of the contractor professions and the different perspectives of other groups concerned with these issues. We have sought to find a fair and reasonable balance, and I think that we have achieved that. On that basis, I commend the proposals to the House.

Dr. Marek: These proposals were the subject of much concern in Committee. The principal worry was that some members of family practitioner sub-committees might have an interest in deciding who would or would not be able to open a pharmacy in a particular area. Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee shared that concern, as did those in the other place. The then Minister, the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe), gave an undertaking to look at the matter again and, following the keen interest shown in the other place, we now have a set of proposals which are vast improvements on the originals.

I am sure that it would be possible to pick holes in the proposals. It is possible that sometimes they will not work as well as they could. I was pleased to hear the Minister's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) that if, at some time, the proposals were seen to have faults, he would look at them again and perhaps correct them. Having said that, it is an important principle that people who have an interest in the opening of pharmacies should not make decisions on them. That raises questions about what happens in the other sub-committees of the family practitioner committees. I am sure that I would be ruled out of order if I went into any detail on that, but the principle is that in this sub-committee the people who make the decisions on opening pharmacies must not have an interest in the matter. What does that mean for the other sub-committees of the family practitioner committees? The principle contained in the amendment is right.

The regulations have yet to be considered. I hope that they are phrased so that the original committee will decide the matter conclusively, not in nine cases out of 10, but in perhaps 49 cases out of 50. We do not want the committee to go through all this and decide who may set up a pharmacy and then have a rerun, in many cases, at the appeal stage. The right to appeal should be kept simple. One should be able to appeal only on very few principles —for example, if something has been done wrongly or if the decision which has been taken is one to which a reasonable person could not hold. However, people should not be allowed to appeal if the only reason for doing so is that, on the balance of probabilities, the decision might have gone the other way. That will depend on drafting of the regulations. In another place, the wording was debated. Their Lordships wondered whether the onus should be on the committee to show that the application should not be granted or on the applicant to show that the committee should grant him permission to open a business. I ask the Minister to consider the matter seriously, because I hope that he will agree that unnecessary quangos are not wanted. If they are not wanted, nor are unnecessary appeals. If unnecessary appeals are not desired, we must get the original committees right so that they reach decisions which are manifestly seen to be fair.

I hope that the decisions and the reasons for them will be made public. I hope that the community health councils will be involved in the decisions and will make representations, because only through an open system can we ensure that the original sub-committee decision will be the right one. We can then tighten the rules on the appeals side.

With that, I cautiously welcome the Lords amendment. It is a big improvement on the previous position and Labour Members will not seek to divide the House on it.

Mr. Weetch: I wish to voice some of my misgivings about the position that still obtains in the Bill. My speech will also give me the chance to question the Minister on matters about which I am still unclear.

I regret the absence of the Adam Smith lobby on the Government Back Benches, because earlier in debate on the Bill they made much thunder about the loss of opportunity for people to enter the pharmaceutical services market and offer them to the public. I expected that, now that the Bill had reached its last gasp in the House, they would be here for a bravura finish, but they have almost entirely fled the field. That is regrettable because there are still some comments to be made in this area, where the Government are doing something pretty serious to the supply of pharmaceutical services.

Under the clause, the supply of pharmaceutical services will be organised according to the principles of regulation as opposed to open entry and unregulated competition. That is a pretty odd approach to be taken by a Government who are dedicated to free enterprise. I do not object to that approach, but it contains, at least at first sight, some philosophical contradictions. The main virtue of the provision is to avoid over-supply and the increase in cost to the taxpayer from the Government having to pay on-cost expenses to too many suppliers. In aggregate, this will increase the unit costs for pharmaceutical supplies throughout the country.

6.15 pm

I accept the Government's approach as sensible, but if people are restricted from entering the pharmaceutical profession to supply services, it is for the Government to ensure that any system of appeal is absolutely watertight.

It is a bad step to allow local opinion to determine the matter as that will be influenced to a great extent by people who stand to lose or gain from the regulation of the supply of the services. The Government's statement that a national appeals system could not be set up because it would be overloaded with bureaucracy and be slow and cumbersome fills me with great dismay. If the Government cannot set up such a system without strangling themselves with red tape, it is a pretty sorry state of affairs.

Out of the blue this week on two large estates in Ipswich —the Chantry estate and the Gainsborough estate— and not in response to any inadequacy of the present service, because the two established chemists involved are models of good suppliers, it was proposed that two new suppliers set up in business when there is already adequate provision. Why should that be? The new suppliers are entering the market before the curtain comes down when the Bill comes into operation. In Ipswich, at least, someone

[Mr. Weetch]

is trying to slide under the door at the last minute to offer services so that he will be in position before the Bill affects what he proposes to do.

I have received two letters this week from separate existing suppliers who argue that they will be damaged because they can cope adequately with the existing demand. Therefore, those two estates do not need any more suppliers. The existing suppliers argue, as do the Government on a general principle, that the increasing costs which the taxpayer will incur through supporting the new entrants will not result in an improved service over the status quo. Therefore, it is difficult to understand how new entrants can be justified. Is it true that throughout the country new suppliers are trying to enter the system at the last moment before the die is cast on the legislation? Is that the case? Have there been many examples elsewhere?

If these new entrants succeed in entering the market for new services, although extra supply is not needed, will they be told to go or will they be allowed to remain for ever now that they have slid under the door at the last minute? If they are subsequently told to go, will they be compensated? Have they come in at the last minute to collect the compensation at the eleventh hour?

I wonder whether the Government can give me some guidance on all those points. While the Minister is replying, I shall be taking down a draft reply that I can use for the two chemists who have written to me this week. I will then be able to say that the reply came straight from the horse's mouth. For the moment, I shall content myself with that.

Mr. Kirkwood: I agree with what has been said in this short debate about the changes contained in these amendments. This legislation is implementing an important step. It is a vast improvement on the rather ham-fisted attempts that the Government were trying to foist upon the profession in Scotland about a year ago when they tried to tag some provisions on to the back end of a miscellaneous legal Bill that applied to Scotland. The House of Lords was quite right to sling the whole lot out.

The worry that was expressed in the House of Lords at that time was the fact that that could be construed, to a certain extent, as a restraint on trade. As the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) has said, we must try to avoid that at all costs. However, we have to balance that against the other needs and requirements of the Health Service. We must be fair—equally we must be seen to be fair—to all parties involved. Although it has taken us a little time, this amendment is a substantial improvement and has every prospect of success.

I am slightly worried about the question of the success or otherwise of the system. Of course, that can be raised when the regulations are brought to the House. However, it is important that the Department should carefully monitor the membership changes that we are making to the committees and the impact that that will have on the system as it works in practice after the Bill has been implemented. I do not know what machinery, if any, exists to do that. I am fresh to this Bill and did not serve at any of the earlier stages. It may be that that point was considered in Committee.

However, I share the anxiety expressed earlier about the machinery that the Government will use to ensure that the appeals procedure is not only working well but is seen to be working well. Steps must be taken to ensure that the way in which decisions are taken by the individual appeal committees is, by and large, consistent throughout the country. Of course, I understand and accept the problem that was referred to earlier about establishing a national appeal system. However, if we end up with a patchwork quilt of differing standards of decisions that would be a matter of concern. I listened carefully to the Minister when he said that he would not stand back and ignore that. However, how will the Minister know whether the system is operating satisfactorily?

The hon. Member for Ipswich indirectly touched upon the question of what steps are to be taken in the course of the appeal process to notify other interested parties—consumer groups, community health councils and so on—that applications are being considered and that the appeals are being heard. Looking at the provisions on the face of the Bill, I am not clear as to what procedures would be necessary in order to notify the public and interested parties about how this new committee and appeal system is working from day to day so that representations can be made by appropriate people at the appropriate time. It may be that those points can be considered when the regulations come before the House. I accept that. However, if there are views in the Department about those major areas, it would help the House in considering the amendment if the Government could say something about them.

This is an important and significant step and should not be taken lightly. I do not think that the Government are taking it lightly. The appeals procedures put in place by this amendment are a vast improvement and I endorse them on behalf of myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mrs. Currie: We hope that the change in the amendments before the House will be welcomed on both sides. They present an excellent example of the revising role of the other place and the importance of the careful negotiations that have taken place between the Government and the pharmaceutical societies concerned. I should say that my brother-in-law is a retail pharmacist in north Devon and, although I have no financial interest in the business that he runs so efficiently, it does mean that I appreciate the role of the retail pharmacist, especially in rural areas, and the excellent work that they are able to do.

The clause as amended produces a balance between the two wide possibilities that might be considered, the first being a free-for-all that some members of the other place have advocated. Indeed, the Office of Fair Trading has drawn our attention to the problem that comes from restriction of trade. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) also drew our attention to that. There is a case for saying that there should be a complete free-for-all and that retail pharmacies should be treated like any other retail business, subject perhaps only to planning permission. The fact is that retail pharmacies are not retail businesses like any other. They provide health care and they are, at least in part, funded in order to provide that health care with taxpayers' money through the National Health Service. Therefore, we have an obligation to ensure an adequate provision of health care as far as possible throughout the country and to be guardians of the public purse. The amendments before us and the clause they amend do that adequately. We have taken careful note of the points that have been made.

The amendment is specific on the decision-making process, the system by which we might get appropriate decisions made. One way of doing that would be if the Elephant and Castle was to decide. However, that would fill all of us on both Front Benches and everywhere else with complete horror. We have enough to do with all the decisions that do come to us. Therefore, it is appropriate that the family practitioner committees and the system that has been established for a long time should be the way it is done.

While allowing retail pharmacists to sit on the panel of the FPC sub-committees to decide and discuss appeals, we felt, and it will be agreed if the House accepts these amendments, that they should not be able to vote. The extension of that exclusion to dispensing doctors will redress the balance. In our view, that is natural justice. The people who serve and vote on the committees must be seen to be independent. There must be seen to be no conflict of interest and, as was pointed out in the other place, we must ensure that there is no danger of subsequent court action as a result of any failure to disclose. That is what has happened. Whether another pharmacist on the panel who is not in retailing but is qualified and working in another area, such as in hospitals, might be able to vote is still a matter for discussion and will be dealt with in the regulations.

We share with the hon. Members for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) a passionate dislike of red tape and we are determined that in drafting regulations we will take note of what has been said in this House and the other place. We share the determination that the system should be simple, speedy and acceptable to all concerned with the interests of the patients being absolutely paramount.

The hon. Member for Ipswich asked about the appeals system. The matter was also raised by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. The proposed new arrangements for allocating pharmacy contracts include an appeals system that is in line with the FPCs' functions, which can operate quickly and will include important safeguards against bias, as we have already discussed. But one of the changes that was agreed by the former Minister for Health after debates was that membership of the appeals panel should be drawn from a national list instead of a regional list, and that the national list should be approved by the Secretary of State for Social Services. The changes aim to balance the need for consistency and experience, which is what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire was aiming at, the need for independence in decision making and the need to deal promptly with appeals, bearing in mind local circumstances. We believe that the appeals system satisfies the concerns expressed by Opposition Members.

6.30 pm

The hon. Member for Wrexham wanted to know about regulations governing procedures of FPCs in other professional work. He may not be aware of the regulations laid down in statutory instrument No. 213, governing the membership and procedure of family practitioner committees. It was laid before Parliament on 28 February 1985. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows this already, but let me remind him that the statutory instrument says that, subject to the provisions of the regulation,

"if a member has any pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in any matter and is present at a meeting of the Committee at which that matter is under consideration—

(a) he shall at the meeting and as soon as practicable after its commencement disclose the fact that he has such an interest; and

(b) he shall not take part in the consideration or discussion of that matter or vote on any question with respect to it."

Dr. Marek: Of course, I am aware of that, but the amendment seeks to introduce a slightly wider implication, that if one is in the same profession, one should not be making a decision on an application. As I am sure the hon. Lady knows, doctors and all sorts of people on FPCs may not have a pecuniary interest, but they are in the same area, and they are making decisions.

Mrs. Currie: What we are trying to do is tie down the measure as hard as we can for the pharmacy profession, in the light of current interests and discussion on the placement of pharmacists. But the regulations are there. We merely want to ensure that, in the case about which we are concerned, with the amendments before us, we tie them down as hard as possible. We expect those regulations to be adhered to as they are set down.

The hon. Member for Ipswich wanted to know about pharmacists opening up in his area recently to beat the regulations and the law that we are trying to create, and asked about compensation. He was kind enough to call me the horse's mouth. If he wants a considered reply from the horse's mouth, it would help the horse enormously if he were kind enough to provide some details of what has happened in his constituency in the past few days. I should be pleased to see them. I can say in general terms that the arrangements for pharmacists coming in before the new arrangements start were agreed as long ago as May 1985. There has been some increase in the numbers of new pharmacies — indeed, the increase has been steady in recent years, which I think many hon. Members will welcome, following a decline during the 1970s. I am advised that there has been no evidence of large increases to beat the new arrangements. I should be glad to hear if that is not so, or if there is any evidence to the contrary.

With regard to compensation for leaving the contract, I refer the hon. Member for Ipswich to the question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris), which was answered on 25 July this year. My hon. Friend asked what safeguards the Secretary of State "intends to introduce into the new pharmacy contract to prevent a pharmacist who has received compensation from a closure from opening a new pharmacy."

The answer was:

"During the debate in Committee on the NHS (Amdt) Bill I agreed to look again at the system of payments to pharmacists who wished to relinquish their NHS contract, or to relocate their business to areas where they could better serve patient needs, to ensure that the system will work as intended and that there are adequate safeguards against abuse.

The proposed system already has a number of important safeguards. It will operate for two years only and small pharmacies only will be eligible; there is no opportunity for someone to open a pharmacy and then quickly close it to obtain a payment".

Those are exactly the circumstances hypothesised by the hon. Member for Ipswich. The answer continues:

"Under the new arrangements a new National Health Service contract will be granted only where it is necessary or desirable for patient services, so new pharmacies will be opened only where patient needs dictate . . . Both the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and the Pharmaceutical Services

[Mrs. Currie]

Negotiating Committee have been consulted and both have given the assurance that they will be playing an active role to make sure that the system operates as intended."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 735-6.]

I hope that that deals adequately with the point made by the hon. Member for Ipswich.

Mr. Weetch *indicated assent.*

Mrs. Currie: I see the hon. Gentleman nodding assent.

Overall, a great deal of work has gone into the amendments and the clause.

Mr. Kirkwood: I wonder whether the hon. Lady can help me tonight. Perhaps a little more time is necessary. Under the new machinery of the amendment, do the Government have any direct method of finding out quickly that the system is not working if it happens locally in different parts of the country?

Mrs. Currie: I have no doubt that we shall be watching closely what happens. As I mentioned a few moments ago, the two main societies involved, to which retail pharmacists belong, the PSGB and the PSNC, will be co-operating with us actively to ensure that the regulations are followed. In other words, if a problem comes up quickly, we expect to be notified quickly so that we can ensure that the regulations are followed. But I am sure that the amount of work and negotiation that have gone into the clause and the amendments, and the effort that has been made to ensure that the system is fair to the pharmacist, the taxpayer and, most of all, the patient, will produce a better system than the one we have now.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 3 agreed to.

New Clause

CO-OPERATION IN PLANNING OF SERVICES FOR DISABLED PERSONS, THE ELDERLY AND OTHERS

Lords amendment: No. 4, after clause 3, insert the following new clause—

"—(1) After section 13 of the 1978 Act there shall be inserted the following sections—

"*Co-operation in planning of services for disabled persons, the elderly and others.*

13A.—(1) The duty under section 13, in relation to persons to whom this section applies, includes—

(a) joint planning of—

(i) services for those persons; and

(ii) the development of those services, being services which are of common concern to Health Boards and either or both of the authorities mentioned in that section;

(b) such consultation with voluntary organisations providing services similar to those mentioned in paragraph *(a)* as might be expected to contribute substantially to the joint planning of the services mentioned in that paragraph;

(c) the publication, at such times and in such manner as the bodies who have made joint plans under paragraph *(a)* consider appropriate, of those joint plans.

(2) This section applies to—

(a) disabled persons within the meaning of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation Act 1986;

(b) persons aged 65 or more; and

(c) such other categories of persons as the Secretary of State may by order specify.

Joint Liaison Committees

13B.—(1) The Secretary of State may, after consultation with such Health Boards, local authorities, education authorities, associations of such authorities and other organisations and persons as appear to him to be appropriate, by order provide for the formation and as to the functions of committees, to be known as joint liaison committees, to advise Health Boards and local and education authorities on the performance of such of their duties under section 13 as consist of co-operation in the planning and operation of services of common concern to Health Boards and such authorities.

(2) An order under subsection (1) may contain provisions relating to the role of voluntary organisations in joint liaison committee.".

(2) Section 15 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 is hereby repealed.".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 8.

Mr. Lang: This new clause is an important step in the development of joint planning in Scotland. Its introduction follows a commitment given by the Government during the passage of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) is here, having returned hotfoot from collecting his "Man of the Year" award earlier today.

The new clause achieves two purposes. First, it sets out the duty that the health boards and local authorities have for co-operation in joint planning of services. Secondly, it confers on the Secretary of State for Scotland a new power to enable him, if necessary, to produce regulations for the statutory direction of the process of joint planning.

Amendment No. 8, which amends the long title of the Bill, is necessary so that it can apply to arrangements for joint planning in Scotland. When the new clause was introduced in another place, it was generally welcomed, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I apologise to the Minister for not speaking in the previous debate. I gather that he had a speech prepared for it, too, which he was obviously longing to make.

I am a little disappointed that it is the hon. Gentleman who is moving the amendment because we in Scotland are disappointed that our Minister responsible for health is now in the other place, and cannot answer questions in the democratically elected House of Parliament, as was the case until the recent reshuffle. It is interesting to note that this amendment was moved in another place by Baroness Trumpington, not by Lord Glenarthur, who is the Minister with responsibility for these matters—I gather luckily, and much to the annoyance of his predecessor, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay)—because he was at a conference in the Bahamas at the time.

We welcome the new clause. We must congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on it, just as we must congratulate him on being one of the 12 men of the year. I am sure that we will find that his work on this subject will be suitably rewarded in the House as well. It was due to his efforts that the English Bill was brought about and it is to the Government's credit that they have brought forward the clause.

Scotland has not done as well as England in regard to joint planning, especially between health boards and local authorities. Successive Governments have been remiss in

that respect. Far too many people in Scotland are institutionalised. I refer especially to the mentally handicapped at hospitals such as Lennoxcastle and the Scottish national hospital at Larbert, who ought to be living in the community. Recent reports have shown that conditions in some of those hospitals make removal of patients from them very necessary. It is only by joint planning such as is proposed that patients can be brought out of those hospitals. It is no use having a commitment to putting patients back into the community if all that we do is put them under the care of a general practitioner who has time only to feed them valium and keep them quiet. They must be given proper support by the combined efforts of the Health Service, health visitors, housing authorities and social services departments. The Bill at least starts us along the road in that direction.

Just last week I spoke at a conference on dementia at Crieff hydro. I was the amateur among the experts, but it is clear that there will be an 80 per cent. increase in the number of people aged over 85 in Scotland during the next 20 years. If, as is the case now, one in six of those people suffers from dementia, we must work on the principle that they should be kept in the community for as long as possible, but we can do that only if we have joint planning arrangements.

It is essential that we include all relevant organisations, including regional and district authorities. We want social work care provided at regional council level and district council involvement through sheltered housing.

What finance do the Government intend to put in? There is little point in setting up joint committees which will make a lot of plans if, for lack of money, nothing happens locally and patients do not receive the care that they need. The system will not work unless we have extra home helps, lunch clubs and meals on wheels, and more social workers involved with the elderly and the handicapped. There has been a decline in the number of home helps, lunch clubs and the number of people going to them in Scotland during the past six years. There must be resources as well as a commitment to the idea. I hope that the Minister will take some time to deal with that.

I assume that there is some way in which to amend the Bill's financial memorandum. The proposed new clause is not included in the financial memorandum, but nobody can say that it has no financial implications. I assume that the Government will deal with that problem unless, of course, they maintain that there is no financial implication. If that is so, we are passing just a load of verbiage. Although this is the way forward when it comes to looking after the disabled and the elderly, the Government must recognise the financial commitment if it is to mean anything.

6.45 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I thank the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) for their generous comments. I think that it was Harold Macmillan who said at a difficult time for his Government that, in politics, a few kind words go a long way. I feel exactly as he did.

The proposed new clause will be warmly welcomed by many of the people who supported the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. It represents a new principle in Scotland. It also represents a step forward. Many organisations such as the Care in the Community Scottish Working Group, the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped and the Glasgow Forum on Disability will welcome the principles enshrined in the new clause, although they might not quite consider the details line by line as exactly what they wanted.

I do not, however, want to be churlish. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart that the principle of joint planning has been in operation in England and Wales for more than 10 years. The evidence seems to be that it is working and that a democratic input into decision-taking has been welcomed. It appears to make sense and to lead to efficiency and effectiveness. It must be good for it to apply to Scotland.

There are a few matters on which I should like some clarification. Paragraph 13A(1)*(b)* speaks of "organisations providing services". Do the Government have in mind advice, the giving of advice, consultation and organisations in Scotland which perform a very useful role? Will they be regarded as providing services in the Scottish context as I understand is the case in England and Wales? Paragraph 13A(1)*(c)* mentions

"the publication, at such times and in such manner as the bodies who have made joint plans under paragraph *(a)* consider appropriate".

Will the Minister take on board the suggestion that there should be an annual report? People involved in the Health Service, social services, mental health care and others might then feel that these matters could be considered at least annually.

Paragraph 13B(1) mentions liaison. Will the Minister confirm that that word refers also to planning so that people who know about the problems which ought to invite joint planning are involved?

My hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart rightly mentioned Lennoxcastle. I should have preferred to say this in the presence of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), but it seemed that the Government were throwing money at that problem. There had been a great deal of criticism of Lennoxcastle. The staff were doing an excellent job, but some of the things being done there could not be defended. As a result of a television programme, the Scottish Minister responsible for health announced that much more money would be spent, but there seems to have been very little consideration of the Government's approach to community care. It seems wrong for the House simply to commit itself to the principle of community care when we have the opportunity to phase out a large Victorian hospital that does not fit in with modern attitudes to community care. It seems to me and to many others that the Government are simply throwing money at the problem.

If joint planning took place in Scotland to the extent that it takes place in England and Wales, those involved with these problems on a day-to-day basis would argue that perhaps there is a better way to spend the money. If resources are limited—and we can have a wider debate about that—the Government are gravely mistaken if they simply make them available to the health board without taking account of the views of the voluntary organisations and social works departments that are called upon to advise on finding solutions to these problems. It would be interesting to know precisely what the Secretary of State intends to do about regulations.

Subsection 13B(2) refers to "voluntary organisations". I hope that that genuinely means that the consumer groups that assist with the problems of mental illness, the mentally handicapped and those with learning difficulties will be

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

involved in the joint planning process. It would be a great pity if organisations such as the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped — which has done a quite outstanding job — and which recognise the need for genuine community care were not involved in the Government's proposals. I am not suggesting that that is the Government's thinking, but it would be helpful to know exactly where they stand.

The parents of profoundly mentally handicapped children, speaking from their experience, have much to say about these matters, as do the organisations that deal with the mentally ill. Many patients themselves are capable of expressing a view. They all want to see progress on joint planning. In an endeavour to be helpful, I hope that the Government, who were slow to accept the principle of joint planning in Scotland, will accept the view of another place and this House that joint planning in Scotland is essential if resources are to be used effectively, if we are to provide the best possible service for patients, if patient care is to mean anything and if community care is to become a reality.

Despite their earlier misgivings — clearly expressed when the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act was debated on Second Reading—I hope that the Government will unreservedly commit themselves to the principle of making joint planning work in Scotland.

Mr. Kirkwood: I reinforce what has been said by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and I associate myself with the remarks made earlier about the part he has played both in this regard and in steering through his Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act. I understand that a significant award has been bestowed on the hon. Gentleman this very day in that he shares the "Man of the Year" award with 11 others. I do not know which other 11 men could possibly measure up to the hon. Gentleman's qualities.

The amendment is welcome, and I am happy to endorse it. However, it is only a limited reserve power. What circumstances do the Government foresee before implementing it?

It was said earlier that the situation in Scotland is not as far advanced as in England. That is perfectly true. That is my experience, and it is not for want of trying by those who wish to make the system work north of the border. The Government do not seem to be actively promoting the idea of joint planning as energetically as they could, and they certainly have not been providing the finance through the health boards and the joint planning system to make it work properly.

This measure, described by Baroness Trumpington as "a useful sanction", is all very well, but I hope that it is only a token of things to come and that it will presage a change in emphasis by the Government by putting resources into the system north of the border.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West spoke of the lack of publication of joint annual reports. I endorse that. There should be publication of some type of annual report. I do not mean that there should be a vast bureaucracy or expenditure, but regular reports on progress in the implementation of joint plans and details of changes and additions to any existing joint plans would be helpful so that we can chart the progress being made in the different regions of the country. That is a minimum requirement before we take decisions about whether or not to implement these reserve powers.

Secondly, there should be mandatory guidelines, or better still a code of practice, on the establishment and operation of joint planning and liaison committees. That would also be a minimal requirement to allow the spirit of the amendment to take effect and flourish.

Thirdly, there is concern about the definition of "voluntary organisations". It would be a shame if it were restricted to voluntary groups that contributed financially to the process in Scotland. It should be extended to include consumer and other voluntary groups that act as representatives. That may be possible at a later stage through regulations that are spawned as a result of this primary legislation. At present the definition is fairly vague and I hope that the Government will interpret it widely.

All this entirely depends on resources. I am prepared to give this change a cautious welcome on behalf of my hon. Friends, but the Government should understand that they are hastening slowly in respect of community care and joint financing north of the border. I hope that the amendment will spur them on to greater efforts in the future.

Mr. Lang: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House has given a welcome to the new clause. I am grateful for that, even though, in the case of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), his welcome was somewhat grudging.

My hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) very much regrets his inability to be here today. As the hon. Member for Cathcart knows, my hon. Friend is in Brussels where he is engaged upon agricultural matters, for which he also has responsibility. The Government agree that there is a need for joint planning, and I hope that the new clause makes that clear. The Government also agree with the hon. Gentleman on the need for care in the community, another useful point that he raised in the debate.

7 pm

The hon. Member for Cathcart asked about the involvement of regional and district councils. I confirm that both regional and district councils are involved in joint planning in all health board areas. The clause is not, however, about spending but about making statutory provision for the formation and function of joint liaison committees. It is about the planning and the arrangements for these committees rather than about cash considerations. Joint liaison committees already exist in all areas. There should not, therefore, be any appreciable increase in cost.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) referred to voluntary organisations. I assure him of the Government's commitment to encouraging the very significant contribution that is made by the voluntary organisations to the provision of community care. If he looks at circular NHS/18 of 1985, he will find in paragraph 31 and onwards the Secretary of State's commitment to the provision of community care.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the terms of the provision that might restrict the extent of voluntary organisation involvement. The Government are very much aware of the considerable amount of work that is done by the voluntary sector and recognise the part that it plays in

the joint planning process. Joint liaison committees are encouraged in the existing guidance on joint planning to involve the voluntary organisations. It is important to allow for some selectivity to prevent committees from foundering through sheer weight of numbers. It is desirable that committees should have the opportunity to structure themselves in a way that best reflects local interests so as best to use the expertise of those who are most closely concerned with the issues. The intention of the clause is to provide for that kind of discretion.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to public accountability. Provision is made for the publication of plans. It is important that this should be done and that the plans should be made available to the public. Clearly, however, it would be counter-productive to have detailed discussion on every minor change to the plans. We do not want great bureaucratic arrangements to be established. Instead, we want to recognise the need for public involvement. It is important to get the broad principles right and then to get on with the job. With the implementation of this clause, I hope that the hon. Gentleman feels that the last brick in his edifice falls into place.

Finally, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) asked what factors the Government might use in deciding whether or not to activate their statutory planning power. We have made it clear, as he recognised in his speech, that this is a reserve power. We would expect to use it only if there were inordinate delay in progress, or if the plans that were produced failed to address the issues that had been put to the joint liaison committees. It is important that the present arrangements should be given a reasonable time within which to produce results. The Scottish Home and Health Department has written to boards to obtain information on progress. Following the passage of the Bill, the intention is to issue guidance to reinforce the Government's commitment to joint planning.

With those comments, I commend the clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 5 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Clause 6

SHORT TITLE, ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 8, line 10, at end insert—

"(4A) Each of the following provisions of this Act—

(a) section 2 above; and

(b) to the extent that it inserts section 13B of the 1978 Act into that Act, section *(Co-operation and advice in relation to disabled persons, the elderly and others)* above,

shall come into force on such day as the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument appoint in relation to it.".

Mrs. Currie: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Dr. Marek: There is a little more to say about this amendment. Unfortunately, no date has been given for its implementation. The Minister can decide when to implement it. He could have said that it is to be implemented within three months. If no financial expenditure is involved, it would have been very nice if the Minister could have said that it would be implemented within three months.

A headline in *The Independent* caught my eye today. It says:

"Patients 'suffering' in community care scheme."

The first two paragraphs of that article say:

"Psychiatric patients are becoming homeless and suicidal through the Government's care in the community programme which is subsidising private residential and nursing homes through benefit payments of £200 million a year, according to the housing charity, Shelter. Shelter says the patients become victims of unscrupulous landlords because both the National Health Service and voluntary bodies do not have the funds to support them after they are discharged from hospital under the programme. It claims one landlord is receiving about £1 million a year through social security benefits."

The article then says:

"Shelter says a draft of an Audit Commission report, to be released in December, supports its view that the process is merely subsidising private landlords."

The article says that former patients had been found

"living in mixed-sex, multi-occupied rooms, some with dangerous, illegally connected electricity supplies. In one case, CoHSE reported that a confused, sixty-year-old woman who had not eaten for two days had retreated into a tiny room at the top of a dilapidated staircase. Her two electric fires were running from an adaptor which was illegally connected to a 5p slot meter."

This is an important matter. We should not leave it just at that, by being asked to agree this amendment formally and then leaving the Minister either to implement or not to implement these powers. They should be implemented quickly. The speedy implementation of this amendment would benefit the elderly and the mentally ill.

I realise that the Conservative party believes in the rich and that it believes in the poor. It believes in one standard of health service for the rich and in a lower standard of health service for the poor. Therefore, I do not have very much hope that the Government will accede to my request, but I should be grateful for the Minister's comments.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security sought to move this amendment formally in the hope of accelerating the business before the House. I am bound to say that I think that the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has stretched the boundaries of the debate—I would not say beyond order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but very near to the edges of order.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland made it very clear that the Government's aim is to secure arrangements over joint planning in Scotland through co-operation between health boards, local authorities and other organisations without the need for statutory intervention. However, to affirm the Government's commitment, my hon. Friend has introduced these proposals by which, subject to a commencement order, the Government can provide for the statutory regulation of joint planning, if it has been clearly shown that the present voluntary arrangements have failed.

It follows from that proposition, which I understand underlies that part of the Bill, that one would need to know what the circumstances were before specifying the date for a commencement order. In that sense, the hon. Member for Wrexham is asking for something that Ministers cannot give to him at this stage, because the circumstances under which a commencement order would be used have not arisen.

I make those comments on a matter that might be thought primarily to be for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. It became clear during his

[Mr. Newton]

remarks that the hon. Member for Wrexham had that clause in mind. In fact, the commencement order provisions that were moved by my hon. Friend relate to other parts of the Bill as well. I shall happily make some observations about our thinking on the other clauses, but I sense that the House is not particularly interested in hearing a further ministerial speech on the subject.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 7 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Lords amendment No. 8 agreed to.

Cereals (Co-responsibility Levy)

7.9 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I beg to move,

That the Cereals Co-responsibility Levy Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1233), dated 14th July 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 15th July, be revoked.

For once I am reasonably confident that the House, perhaps even the Parliamentary Secretary, will agree with me. I mention the Parliamentary Secretary because his right hon. Friend the Minister, who is no doubt necessarily absent from this debate, said as recently as last Thursday:

"I would much rather not have had the co-responsibility levy."—[*Official Report*, 30 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. 439.]

Today we are giving the Minister an opportunity to get rid of that levy. I suggest to the Parliamentary Secretary on this his maiden appearance that he has an opportunity to make a clean break with his recent colleagues in the Whips Office and to vote against this ludicrous levy tonight. I shall be extremely surprised if any hon. Member speaks in favour of it. I should, perhaps, declare an interest as I am a cereal producer and must pay the levy.

The one point of general agreement is that something must be done about cereal surpluses. The Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce in the United Kingdom had 4,777,446 tonnes of cereal in store last month and the position might have been considerably worse if Spain had not had to import substantial quantities of grain this year. It has been estimated that there will be 80 million tonnes of cereals in intervention stores in Europe by 1991. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that there is a need for urgent action to curtail the production of cereals and to help farmers to restructure their businesses in ways which will bring production nearer to the likely level of consumption. At the same time we must give proper consideration to the requirements of consumers and the rural economy.

That will be an extremely complicated task and the only effective, fair way of achieving those objectives is based on a quota system. It is absolutely certain that the co-responsibility levy is a completely pointless diversion from the business of controlling cereal surpluses. Apart from anything else, it just will not work.

The co-responsibility levy on milk has no impact on the production of milk. Indeed, instead of solving any of the problems of that industry, it has been yet another irritation for dairy farmers. In the case of cereals, it is worth looking at the Austrian experience. In Austria a co-responsibility levy on cereals was introduced in 1979. It has since been increased year after year up to a swingeing £25 a tonne this year. Yet the production of cereals has continued to increase. Therefore, there is no evidence that this type of levy will act as a disincentive to cereal growers. On the contrary, the marginal levy might act as a spur for marginal increases in production.

The term "co-responsibility" is one of many examples of linguistic pollution to come to us from the European Commission from time to time. It is intended to imply that the levy will pay for the cost of the intervention system and all that goes with it. It will not. The European Community's gross expenditure on cereals in 1986, including intervention and export refunds, will be £2·53 billion while the levy is supposed to yield only £323

million, so the levy will cover only about 12 per cent. of the costs of the cereals regime, and I suspect that that is an optimistic estimate.

This may be the first instance of an attempt to crack a sledgehammer with a nut and on this occasion it is a fairly unpalatable nut. There are no grounds for hoping that the levy will control the production of cereals. It seems unlikely to make any significant contribution to the cost of operating the intervention system.

But that is not the end of the story. The levy is not only useless but positively disruptive. It is riddled with discriminatory anomalies and may well turn out to be so discriminatory that it will be illegal. The Minister knows that the levy is being challenged in the courts by the European Federation of Animal Feed Manufacturers, which includes the United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association, better known as UKASTA.

It may be worth briefly exploring the way in which the levy is supposed to operate. When a load of barley or wheat is sold from a farm, the merchant who buys it will deduct 337·3p a tonne in levy from the price paid for the grain to the farmer. Incidentally, that ·3p must have been puzzling for many people's accounting systems. I understand that it arises from the conversion from ECUs to pounds sterling. It is merely the first of many complications.

The grain merchant then has various options. He may have to dry it, perhaps from 20 per cent. moisture content as it comes off the farm down to 12 per cent. That would extract moisture from the grain equivalent to 10 per cent. of the original weight, so 34p of the original levy on the tonne of grain would evaporate. The merchant would get the benefit of that much because he would have deducted it from the price paid to the farmer. That is the first of several instances where bigger farmers have an advantage over smaller farmers in the levy system.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I should correct the hon. Gentleman on that. There has been a ruling now that the levy is to be paid on the dry weight, not the wet weight, so what the hon. Gentleman has said is not strictly true.

Mr. Home Robertson: It may not be strictly true, but in effect it is true, because that is what is happening. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman can talk until he is blue in the face, but merchants are deducting the levy from the weight of the grain that is transported away from the farm. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can explain how that can be undone.

That is one example of the way in which this system will militate against smaller farmers. In general, they do not have the drying equipment to enable them to get rid of the moisture in the first place.

To return to this theoretical batch of grain, if it is barley of malting quality or wheat of milling quality, the merchant will either sell it to a British maltster or miller, or export it, perhaps, to Germany. The British maltster or miller, as a leviable cereal user, would have to collect the levy from the merchant and pay it on in due course to the United Kingdom authority, which would forward it to the authorities in Brussels.

The bureaucracy and paperwork involved in all those transactions represent a great deal of expensive hassle to all those involved in trading in grain. That must act as a disincentive to people who should be encouraged to use grain produce here in the United Kingdom. The position is one stage worse if the grain is being exported within the Community, especially into Germany, because recent fluctuations in exchange rates mean that the effective levy on British grain would be £4·60 a tonne instead of £3·73 a tonne. That will presumably make it more difficult to export our grain to the Community. That is yet another disincentive to use our grain and yet another factor which could drive even more grain into intervention.

Life gets even more complicated with feeding grain. Some feeding grain may be sold on to someone who will mill it and feed it to his livestock somewhere within 15 miles of his mill. He would then be exempt from paying the levy. Theoretically, the levy should be paid back to the original producer since his grain has found its way to an exempt user. Generally, that simply cannot be done. No doubt even the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) will understand that point. When feeding barley or wheat from several farms is stored in bulk together in a merchant's silo and some of it goes to an exempt user, there is absolutely no way of establishing which producer's grain has reached the exempt end user. So that element of the levy which has been collected from the farmer will never be paid to the European Community. It will simply disappear into the system.

I spoke to one large user of feeding grain yesterday who told me that he has £15,000 of levy paid into a special bank account and that he does not know what to do with it. Since it is related to grain fed on his farm within the exemption criteria, that money is not due to be paid on to the authorities as levy. Since there is no way of establishing who produced the grain and paid the levy in the first place, it cannot be repaid to the producer. That is a genuine problem.

I imagine that similar things must apply to a number of big, integrated operations. People such as Bernard Matthews may be in a similar position. What justification can there be for devising an exemption scheme that can give substantial advantages to certain big farmers who have large integrated enterprises that produce grain, mill it and feed it to livestock and poultry, while penalising small grain producers and discriminating viciously against feed milling and compounding businesses? What on earth have these people and their customers done to deserve such disruption and unfair discrimination?

Not surprisingly, mobile milling and mixing operations are doing a roaring trade, processing feed on or near farms in order to exploit these loopholes. We could go on to discuss—and no doubt we shall—other aspects of this dotty system, such as the retrospective levy on grain traded before the system was introduced.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, to a degree, he is preaching to the converted? Even my right hon. Friend the Minister has said that he does not like the system. Bearing in mind the time limit on the debate, rather than hear more about the problems, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us the Labour party's proposals that might be acceptable to the other 11 countries and possibly reassure British farmers and their interests.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman and, apparently, the Minister will vote against the levy. However, he must bear with me for a minute or two.

It is important to understand just how daft the system is. I referred to the fact that the levy is retrospective on

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grain that was traded before the system was introduced. There is the question of the levy that has to be paid on screenings that are taken out when cereal seed is dressed and the apportionment of levy on feed mixes, which include whole grain. When you eat your muesli for breakfast tomorrow morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may care to ponder on the fact that the whole grain is not subject to levy while the milled grain has been subject to the levy. Then, of course, there is the whole business of getting exemption certificates on grain carried over from the previous year, which is likely to get even more complicated if the levy rate is varied next July, as seems likely. The hassle involved in this scheme is out of all proportion to what it is worth.

I suspect that the whole elaborate bureaucratic farce would do credit to the authors of "Yes, Minister", especially since the Minister has said that he is opposed to the idea of a co-responsibility levy. However, the officials at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have really excelled themselves this time. They have devised such a moronic scheme that it has actually been adopted as a blueprint by the European Commission and recommended for use in other European countries.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Before the European countries pursue the model that my hon. Friend has described, and in reference to the point made by the hon. Member for Shewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway), is my hon. Friend aware that after watching a programme on Central Television at the weekend, which presented a story of malpractice and fraud, I tabled a series of questions last night in which I suggested that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should remove the document and examine the whole policy and management of intervention grain in this country forthwith?

Mr. Home Robertson: I know that my hon. Friend has tabled a series of questions on this subject. He is quite right to suggest that the whole intervention system is wide open to abuse.

Speaking of abuse, I should like to refer to the way in which other countries operate within the cereals regime. For instance, we understand that the Italians have not been quite as daft as to accept this system. Instead of going to such frantic lengths to collect levy on 75 per cent. of cereals, the Italian Government have done a deal with the Commission, whereby they will simply pay a lump sum equivalent to the levy on 22 per cent. of their cereal crop. They will not bother to collect the levy from their producers or consumers. Perhaps the Minister can confirm that. In this instance, I suggest that the Italians have treated the whole idea of the co-responsibility levy with the contempt that it deserves.

I want to summarise briefly the points about the levy. It is hitting consumers as much as it is hitting producers. The psychological effect is equivalent to regarding it as a tax on grain. The levy will make it more difficult to dispose of grain. Secondly, the levy will not reduce production, so it will probably have the net effect of increasing the size of the grain mountain. Thirdly, as I have already explained, it will not cover the cost of the intervention system and the export subsidies. Finally, as I have tried to demonstrate, it is an administrative nightmare, fraught with anomalies that discriminate unfairly between producers and consumers.

There are alternatives. If we must have a levy—and we may have to have one—it should be based on acreage, or it could be collected like the Home Grown Cereals Authority levy on all farm sales, which would at least be a tax on production rather than consumption. Better still, the intervention price could be cut, which would have the combined attraction of saving taxpayers' money and penalising those producers who are growing grain that cannot be marketed.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Home Robertson: No, I will not give way. I know that the hon. Gentleman and many other hon. Members wish to participate. I have already been generous in giving way, and I am concluding my remarks.

The levy is nonsense. The industry knows that it is nonsense, and it has been universally condemned by the representative organisations of the farming, grain trading and processing industries and those who use cereals—specifically I can cite the National Farmers Union, UKASTA and the British Poultry Federation, which has briefed all hon. Members on this point.

The Minister knows that the levy does not make sense. The House will do all concerned a great favour by flinging out the regulations tonight and telling the European Commission to come back with more intelligent proposals.

7.28 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): I thank the House for its warm reception—I hope that it is as warm when I finish my speech. I shall not speak for as long as the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), as I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to take part in the debate. As the hon. Member for East Lothian understands, I regret that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is in Europe chairing the Council.

The hon. Member for East Lothian sketched the European problem. However, the world is full of cereals. The picture has changed dramatically over the past decade. China and India are now food exporters; Canada, Australia, the United States of America, Europe and other countries could produce even more, if it could be sold. The tragedy of the Third world is one of distribution and political will. That tragedy is our problem tonight and every night, but it is not the subject of this debate.

Even in my working lifetime we have imported wheat from Russia and the Sudan. Russia will not be an importer for ever. We are debating the narrow issue of Europe and the changes that were agreed at this year's price fixing. We are debating one part of one change only—the co-responsibility levy. This is not the Second Reading of a price-fixing 1986 European Bill. We are debating the regulations. The Government have accepted responsibility for the collection of the levy. Voting against the regulations concerning the mechanics will help no one.

The distortions supposedly seen by some in the new market are different, depending on their viewpoint. Voting against the regulations will change no one's viewpoint outside the House. The Government have made their position clear in Europe. Voting against the regulations will not stifle that clear voice. It will not help our negotiators in Europe, because the path has been laid out

before us and to vote against the administration of the levy will be seen – because that is all that it is – as a purely United Kingdom matter.

To achieve their objective the regulations lay down a number of administrative requirements. They provide for the operation of a register of cereal processors by the Intervention Board. They enable the board to recover the levy in cases of non-payment. They require the keeping and production of necessary records, and they provide for the necessary powers of entry and for offences.

The regulations do not deal with the key issue of who pays the levy, the circumstances under which it is payable, or how much it should be. That does not mean that the Government are not listening to the many points of view and the valuable ideas expressed in the debate. Many of those points were foreshadowed in the speech by the hon. Member for East Lothian and I am sure that he has read the brief that was sent to all hon. Members.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Presumably the Minister is here to answer questions on something about which we will not be allowed to vote. Can he tell us why it is legitimate to tax the consumer for the faults resulting from the over-production of the producer?

Mr. Thompson: It is not a tax on the producer or the consumer; it is a co-responsibility levy.

The hon. Gentleman makes up his own mind when he wants to vote and then decides which side he wants to vote for. I am sure that he will put his question more clearly later. As I hinted, the co-responsibility levy was not the Government's preferred option although the hon. Gentleman will not find any quotes from me on the matter.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Can my hon. Friend clarify one point? Is it not right to argue that the co-responsibility levy, warts and all, formed part of an overall package of appreciable savings to the Common Market and that that is welcome?

Mr. Thompson: I have always wanted to say, "I am coming to that" and I can tell my hon. Friend that I am coming to that. As I said, the co-responsibility levy was not the Government's preferred option.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Perhaps the Minister would stop being so apologetic for this proposal. The taxpayers of Europe are paying £150 million a week for the dumping, destruction and storage of food surpluses and, according to the EEC, the consumer is paying £13 a week more for his food because of the CAP. Surely it is right that producers should carry some responsibility as set out in this proposal.

Mr. Thompson: That is a turn-up for the book. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. This proposal represents the first real progress we have seen to bring cereals into a better balance. The order sets out the initial framework, and a better balance will be achieved in three ways. First, charging the levy on sales into intervention means that the effective level of support is reduced. It is like a cut in the intervention price in its effect on producers. In combination with the other measures adopted at the price fixing, it is part of a package which led to a marked reduction in support levels. Secondly, we were able to avoid the discrimination against the United Kingdom which is often inherent in co-responsibility levy systems. Finally, given the importance which the Commission and some of the other member states attached to the idea, it was an essential part of a satisfactory price package for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am listening with considerable care to the excellent argument that my hon. Friend is deploying. It would help Government Members who have agricultural interests if my hon. Friend could tell us why so many of the organisations that represent agricultural interests are opposed to the levy. As we have been told, the British Poultry Federation has issued a circular to all hon. Members urging them to vote against this order. It would help us quite immensely if my hon. Friend could tell us why there is so much opposition to the order.

Mr. Thompson: Many people are opposed to it because it is untried and new. The levy will not reduce production unless it is taken in conjunction with other things. The Community needs to adopt further measures, some of which were hinted at in the debate. Our countryside, our farmers and producers must be protected but there must be other measures as well. By and large, the outcome of the 1986 price fixing for cereals is quite an achievement.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The hon. Gentleman is handling a difficult brief with a great deal of humour. May I try him again on the question put to him by his hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) who said that all the poultry businesses are against this? In all the circulars that I have received the authors are arguing, at least in Scotland, that this will disturb the free market and disturb competition. It is not being operated uniformly. What is the Minister's reaction to that? The Minister would agree that his party is more wedded to the free market than mine. I am told that this is not a Scottish problem but an English problem. The Minister says it is a United Kingdom problem, but that is not the case because industrialists in Scotland say it is purely an English problem because in Scotland there is a net deficit.

Mr. Thompson: The representations received by the hon. Gentleman are received by all hon. Members. They come down on both sides, some supporting the case of the millers and some the case of the users. I shall come to that shortly. There are serious doubts in the minds of farmers and others, but the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I cannot deal with them all tonight. The most important of these is the discrimination felt to be caused by exempting from the levy the grain processed into animal feed for stock on the same farm, but charging the levy on grain used by commercial compounders. We have done our best to ensure that the farms exempt from the levy on grain which they process are genuine farms. The value of the output of the feed compounding industry last year was £1·8 billion. People processing on the farm will have exemptions valued at probably less than 1 per cent. of that.

There is a strong cry for equality of misery and we have heard that cry during the debate. There may be other ways of proceeding and we shall certainly need to look carefully at the issue and its development. It is realistic to assume that the levy is here for some time. It is favoured by the Commission and by some member states because it is putting money into the coffers of the Community to the tune of £400 million. Our figures differ but not much.

The mechanism will not remain unchanged. We must look for changes that ease the burden on producers and

[Mr. Thompson]

traders in the United Kingdom. A certain, though limited, distortion is inevitable in any levy system. As I said earlier, that is one of the reasons why we have never been enthusiastic about the principle. Serious problems have arisen mainly because of the haste with which the system was introduced. In an ideal world the Community would never have set its timetable in the way it did.

Many issues needed clarification and many difficulties remain, notably the question of how to fulfil the requirement that the levy, although collected at the processing stage, should be passed back to the producer. I will not go into these now, because I want to hear what hon. Members have to say about them. With the co-operation of the industry, we have been able to sort out many problems and we shall certainly try to continue this process.

7.39 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I am grateful for this brief opportunity to protest against these proposals on behalf of many of my constituents, and many in the Province of which my constituency is a part, who will suffer as a result of them.

Tonight is one of those miserable occasions to which the House has become accustomed since it resigned its powers in order to become part of the EEC, when a Minister says to the House, "I don't like this proposal. I know you don't like it either. Probably no one likes it. But you'll have to put up with it because I brought it back from the EEC." It is not surprising that in a debate beginning at 7 pm the Government have taken the unusual step of deliberately curtailing so unpleasant an occasion to an hour and a half, perhaps mistaking it for one of the Northern Ireland Orders in Council.

This is a bad tax on three grounds. First, it is unjust; secondly, it is foolish; thirdly, it is damaging. The tax is unjust because it treats differently those who are producing and consuming, according to whether they belong to the same commercial organisation. That is a blatant injustice upon the face of the proposals, and is, I understand, the cause of the main complaint against them. That, at any rate, should be eliminated in any alternative that the Government succeed in putting in the place of these proposals.

The tax is self-defeating, because it operates to reduce the base which it leaves subject to taxation. The very operation of the tax will encourage those forms of production, and those links between production and consumption which enable the tax to be avoided. As a result the level of the levy will need to be increased year after year as the period that the Minister foresaw goes on. It is a self-defeating tax, or at least a self-augmenting tax, which is perhaps the worst sort of tax.

The tax is damaging, in that it will strike against both milling and producing interests in so far as they are separate. Take, for example, in Northern Ireland one milling undertaking which directly employs no fewer than 1,600 people and is in contract with over 200 poultry producers, maintaining 6 million poultry. Both the users and producers in that relationship will be damaged and discriminated against by this measure. Inevitably, the result will be the repression of certain forms of production and certain forms of employment. That is not something that can be accepted in the rest of the United Kingdom. It is certainly not acceptable in Northern Ireland, and I shall join with those who vote against the regulations this evening.

7.42 pm

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): In considering this measure, we must be honest and frank and say that the way in which the co-responsibility levy is being introduced and put into practice will make a terrible mess of things. Anomalies abound. Moreover, as has been said, there will be attempts to get round the levy. Indeed, that is only natural in the farming world.

This problem is entirely the fault of the EC. It was warned by my right hon. Friend the Minister, and no blame can attach to him. When the package deal was being worked out, he warned that there would be problems, and we are now seeing the results, which are not good. However, the original proposals were far worse, and would have been very unfair to British agriculture. The 25-acre exemption from paying the levy would have meant that the European countries were let off while we were penalised.

Unfortunately, this measure is part of the package deal. At the price review, the other parts of that deal were very good. For example, we wanted to continue the beef premium, and the devaluation of the green pound was certainly necessary. The sheepmeat regime continued, and we clearly wanted that. The Opposition and some of my hon. Friends do not seem to understand that the Minister had to steer a balance between what is desirable and what is negotiable. If the Socialists came to power and kept Britain in Europe, the same problem would still arise.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Peter Mills: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make my speech, I am sure that he will have a chance to make his in a moment.

If we are dealing with many other Ministers and want a package deal, something, somewhere, must give. But having said that, changes will have to be made. The mechanism is not working correctly, and I believe that my right hon. Friend the Minister should be told that at the next price review there will have to be a change. In the circumstances, this measure was right, but it is wrong in practice.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Peter Mills: I hope that my hon. Friend will have a chance to speak shortly, and that he will forgive me if I do not give way.

The most serious problem is the disadvantage to stock farmers who do not grow corn as against those who do. The difference amounts to £3·37 per tonne. A pig producer or poultry dealer who makes a small margin of profit will be put at a great disadvantage compared with the farmer who grows his grain, feeds it to his stock and does not have to pay the levy.

An old NFU friend of mine, Don Avery, of the Northern Chick Growers Association, says that it will cost his group of 140 members £250,000 extra. That is very unfair. In the south-west of England, the situation is even more serious, because we do not grow so much grain. It is purchased and brought into the area, and so we are at a disadvantage.

I shall quote from the mill manager of Dalgety Agriculture Ltd. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can answer either at the end of the debate or in a letter the five serious points that he raises. The manager says:

"1. The levy has not reduced the price paid by processors and the consumer gains no benefit—it is therefore a tax on consumption.

2. It does not reduce the price to the livestock feeder who is already under pressure.

3. It encourages integrated production on the large arable units of the east at the expense of the family sized farm in our area."

That is the south-west.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the hon. Gentleman be voting against the regulations?

Sir Peter Mills: The hon. Gentleman must try to listen to my speech, feeble though it may be. He can then decide whether I am right. The manager continues by referring to

"4. The complete shambles that has been created in terms of administration to collect the levy."

That too must be altered. Finally, the manager says:

"At the end of the day it has done nothing to reduce production and increase consumption."

Thus the principle is wrong and so is the practice. Urgent changes are required. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Minister should return at the next price review—it cannot be done here and now—and ensure that the levy is deducted from the intervention price. That seems to be fair to all, and easier to administer.

This is only one aspect of a bigger package deal for dealing with surpluses. We have to move on. We must either set aside further price reductions at the end or encourage alternative crops. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members bleat at me and ask what I would do. Action must be taken at the next price review. If hon. Members understood what has been happening, they would know that that is the solution. A further package must be agreed. I hope that the Minister will accept my view, which I believe to be the view of many of my hon. Friends, that the package is not working and needs to be changed. We accept that a package deal was agreed and that there are advantages, but there must be change.

7.51 pm

Mr. Thomas Torney (Bradford, South): I draw attention to the effect on the poultry industry of our agreeing to the levy. The Government have failed to fight hard enough for the needs of the poultry sector, which uses a tremendous amount of our cereal production. The Minister led the poultry industry to believe that there would be total exemption from the levy, but that will not happen in practice.

The legislation is bad because, although it operates in the interests of some, it could drive others out of business. Some poultry processors have to pay on all their grain, some are totally exempt from the levy and some are in between, paying an average per tonne depending on the percentage of throughput which is exempt.

There is considerable distortion of competition, which ranges from zero to £3·37 per tonne. Given the huge amount of feed tonnage used by the poultry sector, this amounts to a great deal of money and causes considerable disadvantage between British processors.

The levy, as enshrined in European legislation, is intended to run for five years. After talks with Commission officials, the industry formed the opinion that if collecting the tax were successful it would be increased. The distortion of competition will therefore be increased.

As recently as 30 October the Minister said that neither he nor the House of Commons liked the levy. Thus, a vote against the order will not be a defeat for the Government, but an expression of support for the Government in restricting the levy planned in Brussels.

The levy is supposed to dissuade cereal producers from creating surpluses. It will have the reverse effect. It will stimulate production to pay the cost of the levy.

It is a bad principle that the customer should be penalised because the producer over-supplies. Normally, over-production results in lower prices. That is in the best interests of both the poultry and cereals producer. The United Kingdom poultry meat and egg industries have been systematically attacked by continental producers. According to Ministry of Agriculture figures, it seems that once again the United Kingdom has a worse deal than other EEC countries because our producers will have to pay more in levy.

The competitive position of poultry meat and egg imports will be weakened and the jobs of poultry meat and egg workers will be put at risk, as will those of workers in the cereal sector.

The levy is discriminatory between member states which have difficult internal rules. It is discriminatory between producers because some are exempt and some are not. It is discriminatory for the poultry industry because it uses so much cereal, so support prices will remain high when world prices are falling.

The effect on the farmer of a 3 per cent. co-responsibility levy is the same as a 3 per cent. reduction in support prices. However, a 3 per cent. support price reduction would have preferred effects. It would be equal for all cereal producers in the EEC and the United Kingdom and it would cut the work of the intervention board which runs the bureaucracy to collect the levy. It would represent a saving on export restitution where grain is exported and it would encourage poultry meat and egg producers, and processors, to use grain instead of cereal substitutes.

If hon. Members vote against the levy tonight they will be voting not against the Government, but against the EEC which wants to introduce a levy which no one else likes or wants.

7.56 pm

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): It is a pleasure to see the heavyweight presence of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on the Front Bench in a speaking rather than a speechless role.

There are many major and detailed arguments against the co-responsibility regulations. The retrospection and exemptions cause unfairness and will continue to do so. Purchasers of grain are uncertain whether they are exempt from the levy. It benefits neither the producer nor the consumer, and it is bureaucratic. However, I realise that the levy produces temporary benefit for the European Community budget.

I am against the concept of the co-responsibility levy, not because it will achieve no purpose, but because it will worsen the problem with which it seeks to cope. An example was given to me by a senior member of the National Farmers Union in my county. He tells me that

[Mr. Charles Morrison]

in Austria a co-responsibility levy has been imposed since 1979. The wheat surplus has increased from 80,000 tonnes to 1·2 million tonnes in the seven years since.

Of course, the co-responsibility levy amounts to a price cut for producers, but it is not enough to be an incentive. It is the opposite. It is an incentive only to increase production to counter the financial loss which stems from the co-responsibility levy. I believe that the problems of increased surplus production will be made worse rather than better.

The basic problem which the Community faces is that grain production has grown from 100 million tonnes to 140 million tonnes per annum in the last 10 years, whilst consumption has remained static at about 120 million tonnes. As the European Commission has said, unless drastic action is taken, about 80 million tonnes will be in intervention store by 1991. The cost of that will be unbearable.

The solution proposed by my right hon. Friend the Minister is a voluntary set-aside system. I agree that any set-aside system would be better than none, but I fear that the time for a voluntary set-aside system is past. A voluntary system will not be adequate to cope with the problem facing us. A voluntary set-aside system could, of course, be accompanied by price cuts, but it is my guess that the level of price cuts necessary to reduce production would be unacceptable to other countries within the European Community, let alone to farmers in our country.

It would be necessary to have a compulsory set-aside system plus quotas. I know that quotas create huge problems, but without them agricultural science and productive farming will steadily increase the total output. A voluntary set-aside system will alleviate the problem, but only temporarily. Therefore, we must consider a compulsory system, plus quotas.

However, I am prepared to accept that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has done his best to deal with a bad job and remove some of the rougher edges from the co-responsibility levy. I am therefore prepared to support the Government on the basis that next year my right hon. Friend will be fighting with his colleagues in the Council of Ministers to produce a better regime to cope with grain surpluses.

8.1 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) because I very much agree with his view on a long-term solution. I am happy to forestall the intervention from the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), "What would you do?", by saying so. The proposals described by the hon. Member for Devizes were advanced in a White Paper published by the Social Democratic party in December 1985, and were also advanced by alliance spokesmen in the debate last January. So our proposals providing an alternative means of dealing with the endemic problem of surplus cereals within the Community have been well worked out.

I should like to welcome the Minister to his new office. His performance tonight has been amiable. However, it left more questions in our minds than it gave answers, which is becoming a pattern with Ministers who speak for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. They say that they want to hear what the House has to say, but they go away and do almost the opposite of what the House said should be done.

The origins of this fiasco should be laid not at the door of the Minister, but at that of his superior whose absence tonight is quite understood. However, the Minister cannot escape blame for the imbroglio into which he has plunged almost all sectors of agriculture by his actions.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food described the needs of the cereals industry in a speech that he made in Berlin in January of this year. He set out his philosophy quite clearly in that speech by saying that he rejected the quota approach. In fact, he said that he favoured a free market approach. His actual words were:

"The alternative to the quotas is to expose the industry to more market forces."

Whatever the Minister has achieved since January, it cannot be said that he has exposed the industry to more market forces. He has introduced a form of penalty which is more damaging than a simple price cut. Indeed, it has no benefits for consumers or producers and few for taxpayers.

Mr. Hunter: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: No, time is limited and it would be unfair to the hon. Gentleman's colleagues to give way.

Perhaps the most serious thing that the Minister said was that it is realistic to accept that we shall have to live with the co-responsibility levy for some time. That is not necessarily the case, and would not be so if the Minister and his colleagues in the Council of Ministers took a trenchant stand and fought for a more rational system. We need only consider milk. Co-responsibility levies were quickly proved to be a wholly inadequate way of dealing with milk surpluses. The European Community came round to the recognition that quantitative limits on price support would be an appropriate and effective way of dealing with the problem of milk. The Minister will never get it right if he sets his face permanently against that approach.

However, the Minister introduced the co-responsibility levy reluctantly, and has, in a sense, tried to wash his hands of all responsibility for it. In a statement issued in mid-July after the regulations had been drawn up, he said:

"A levy had to be accepted in order to achieve a sensible and effective settlement on cereals as a whole."

Nobody who trades in or produces cereals believes that the last price fixing resulted in a sensible and effective settlement on cereals as a whole. Nor did consumers of cereals, for example—the livestock sector—believe that the settlement was sensible or effective.

The price paid for this mess seems to have been high. It has been a system which, in the short term, greatly distorts trade. Cereal users who process on-farm can enjoy an advantage that is not available to other cereal users.

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): It does discriminate because those hit hardest by the levy are those livestock farmers who do not grow their own cereals. Many have small family farms and are now at a competitive disadvantage——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I hope that the hon. Lady realises that this is a short debate and interventions must be genuine and short.

Mr. Maclennan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) for making that point.

The distortion is not only between different types of users, as she rightly said; there is also a regional distortion in that those who depend on grass and cannot process on-farm are suffering considerably. That is especially true of parts of Wales and the west country. Nor can it be said that the distortions are operating only on the farms. They are also operating in respect of different types of merchants—the compounders and processors are being hit hard. Nor can it be said that this has been operated with equity throughout the European Community, because under the arrangements which are operating to exempt small producers in Spain, about 90 per cent. of cereal users are totally exempt from the operations of the levy.

What will be the long-term effects of this? If the levy were to be kept at its present level, the distortions would grow as people adapt to what has happened. There would be more on-farm processing. There would be more vertical integration. There would be more use of mobile units and mixers. That would be extremely undesirable because economies will not come from that. There will be considerable diseconomies and considerable unemployment in the area of processing.

Mr. Hunter: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: No, I shall not give way because, as I have already said, the debate is short.

Is all this misery worthwhile? Will it produce the results? Will it succeed in reducing the mountain? Austria has been given as an example already. The Community is unlikely to introduce a truly penal level that hits deeply, but at any conceivable level the operation of the levy would not reduce the mountain. It will simply continue to exacerbate the distortions in trade.

We must ask what the Minister will do about the anomalies that have emerged. Will the industry have to live with this for the full five years? We have been told that we must live with it for some time, but what do the Government want? Do they want to abolish it or live with it? What amendments are being discussed with the Council to remove the anomalies? Does the Minister intend to introduce an audit system to ensure that any levy deducted from growers is passed on to the Intervention Board, as has been advocated by the National Farmers Union? Does he intend quietly to acquiesce in, or even possibly to advocate, an increase in the levy in order to tackle the cereal surplus problem?

Those questions must be answered and they should be answered tonight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful for the brevity of the Back-Bench speeches. I remind the House that the debate will finish at 8.39 pm and that the Front Bench spokesmen hope to catch my eye at 8.35 pm.

8.11 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Last Thursday the Minister of State told the House that the cereal forecast for this year is 24·6 million tonnes. Therefore, the size of the problem is well known to hon. Members.

An interesting breakdown was given in the agricultural review. Within the cereals production for 1985 was 11·9 million tonnes for wheat, 9·6 million tonnes for barley and 0·576 million tonnes for oats. Therefore, the scale of the wheat problem in particular is put in perspective. Cereal production in Britain represents 19·4 per cent. of the gross agriculture output.

Britain's particular problem in relation to our membership of the EEC is that we produce 21 per cent. of the Common Market's wheat production and 24 per cent. of barley. Therefore, we are a major contributor to the problems that we face in the Community.

Of the different groups who have been represented so far in tonight's debate, I was fortunate enough to meet representatives of the Shropshire branch of the Country Landowners' Association on Monday. As my hon. Friends will know, the CLA is particularly worried that the levy is being imposed retroactively on contracts entered into before the levy was introduced. That is a most unfair way of treating the agricultural community. One wonders whether it is legal.

The reason given for back-dating was to prevent fraud, but that is unacceptable. Fraud should be dealt with in the normal way with the guilty party being prosecuted. The measure should not have been introduced retrospectively across the board, catching the innocent producer.

The Shropshire branch of the NFU made its views clear to me on that issue, as it does on many issues relating to agriculture. It feels that the levy will be impossible to operate fairly, and I think that that view is shared by both sides of the House. The levy will inevitably cause an imbalance for arable and livestock farmers and the exemptions will be difficult, if not impossible, to monitor. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will explain the Ministry's opposition to a proper audit on the deduction of levy from growers because that is a point of considerable concern to the industry.

UKASTA believes that this is an effort and expense for both trade and Government which is not justified and will leave the present problem unresolved. It is particularly concerned about the lack of consultation and preparation. I can only wish it well in its legal action against this unfortunate and hopeless measure.

The Commission's objective of a policy for quality is unlikely to be obtained. I do not think that any hon. Member thinks that it will curtail surpluses. Again, we do not believe that that will save some of the costs of sustaining those surpluses.

Therefore, we must look at the problem into which the Government have got themselves. They sought a package of measures, including price restraint and set-aside, which were not acceptable to the other 11 member states. There again, the options supported by the other 11 would have been far worse for Britain if our Ministers at the negotiating table had not been strong minded and had not fought off the proposals. The House and the Opposition must recognise that. Indeed, the industry must recognise it and give credit where it is due.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, speaking in the House last week, said that he did not like the measure. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, in his spirited defence of the Ministry tonight, has repeated that view. Therefore, that view is shared on both sides of the House. Bearing in mind the advantages that came out of that package, particularly the beef premium, we shall move forward at the next round of negotiations.

The Opposition must not try to kid the Conservative party that their motion tonight achieves anything. It has not split the Conservative party on the Back Benches and that will be reflected in the Division. Equally, as I know only too well from my meeting in Shrewsbury on Monday, it does not fool the farmers. They are aware of the

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problems that exist and that something must be done. Undoubtedly, we are faced tonight with a great deal of EEC gobbledegook, which is not welcome in Britain, but at the moment we have no way of getting out of it.

My message to my right hon. Friend would be to urge him in future to do it the French way—when the matter goes back to the negotiating table, make sure we follow the advice from Shropshire and put Britain's interests first, second, third and fourth in future negotiations.

8.16 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I am not sure what is more demeaning of Parliament—a Minister who tells us that we cannot vote against this measure because it will be a meaningless gesture, or Tory Members of Parliament who tell us how much they are opposed to this and how damaging it will be to agriculture, but are not prepared to vote against it.

We are debating an important development in agriculture policy. It is a reflection of the low priority that the Government have increasingly attached to agriculture that we are having to encapsulate all the speeches and arguments within one and a half hours.

When the Minister says that it is realistic to assume that the measure will be with us for some time, by gum, he is right. First, we know that it will not necessarily stay at £3.37 a tonne. It could become an even greater imposition on our industry. Secondly, we have been down this road before. We have had the milk co-responsibility levy. In passing, may I say to our Front Bench that we shall be more enthusiastic about cereals quotas when we see them having an effect on the milk surplus after all the traumas we went through on that.

Not one hon. Member has argued that this measure will solve the problem—the common agricultural policy. That is costing us—all the member states of the Community—about £15,000 million a year, the bulk of it being wasted in intervention and storage and export subsidies.

Mr. Hunter *rose*—

Mr. Strang: The measure will not cut the cereals surplus, which has been rising and which is costing us so much money. There seems to be a consensus on that. Yet, apparently, we are not going to reject it, judging from some of the speeches of Conservative Members. It is an imposition on our industry for a number of reasons. First, it discriminates against small farmers. In the main, small farmers use compounders while the larger farmers tend to be able to undertake their own compounding and mixing. Secondly, it discriminates against the feed compound industry, as the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and others have argued. It is an industry that is providing a valuable service in terms of processing and employment. It is also a serious imposition on our pig and poultry industries as it is understood that about 70 per cent. of the cost of production in these industries is accounted for by cereals.

The position of certain operators in the poultry industry will be undermined arbitrarily. We have had a successful poultry industry over the years, but it has been crippled progressively for various reasons that I shall not develop now. It can be said, however, that in this country we took a lead in the poultry industry. If a large proportion of an enterprise's poultry production is within 15 miles of its feed compound unit, it will not pay the levy on that element of the cereal input. The bulk of large producers, however, have most of their production more than 15 miles away from the feed compound unit, and these may be the most efficient producers. Through this measure, we may be discriminating against the best companies that we should be encouraging to expand.

The measure is an attack upon the poultry industry because it will in practice discriminate against British poultry producers. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has said that Italy will not operate the proposed system and instead will chip in roughly the sum that the Commission reckons would be raised. In other words, Italy will forget about it. I am not sure how many Conservative Members have been to France recently or have spoken to those who have. We are always the first to develop our bureaucracy and intervention systems. We shall police the system and ensure that it is operated effectively, but is anyone pretending that the French will do that? Of course they will not. We know that and our industry knows that. That is why the measure discriminates against our producers and attacks our industry and our jobs.

The effect on trade outside the Community is not all that important because of the high cereals prices. The export subsidy to shift grain from the Community is about £80 per tonne. I note that the Minister is nodding his head. He will be aware that the world price of grain is about a third of the price at which it is being traded within the EEC. That goes back to the deal which was struck between the German and French Governments long before we joined the Community. It is a grotesque system. As I have said, about 70 per cent. of costs in the pig and poultry industries is accounted for by cereals, yet the cost of production is about three times the world price. Against that background there is no chance of our poultry industry making any impact on world markets.

This measure is nonsensical and it is not good enough for Conservative Members merely to make speeches that are critical of it. We want it to be defeated this evening.

8.24 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): As a member of the trade, perhaps I might correct one or two of the anomalies that have developed this evening. First, the impression has been given—sadly by both sides of the House—that the trade is in utter chaos because of the co-responsibility levy, that our trade feels discriminated against in certain sectors and that prices have made us uncompetitive. That is not true. The trade does not like the levy and we support the Minister in his opposition to it. I support and welcome the spirited speech of my hon. Friend the Minister which was made in difficult circumstances.

There is no chaos but there would be if the levy were to be increased next time round, and that is my greatest fear. There has been some talk that the levy could be doubled, and if that were to happen the impact upon our producers and consumers would give effect to the fears that have been expressed this evening. The effect on the compound industry could be catastrophic. The number who mill and mix on their own farms would increase, and that would mean a serious loss of employment in the compound trade. My hon. Friend the Minister must resist any increase in the levy this time round.

An increase in the levy would encourage the use of Third world substitutes, and there is no doubt that cheap substitutes exist. If we price ourselves out of the market by putting our prices for feed wheat and feed barley above those that the trade has to pay for Third world substitutes, there would be a massive switch to those products. That would be a catastrophe for the compound industry and for feed users and for those who grow the grain.

If the levy were doubled, as has been rumoured, the evasion which has been hinted at tonight on the part of various producers would be encouraged. At present, there is no evasion and the trade is living with £3·37. It does not like the levy and farmers do not like it, but we are living with it. If the levy were increased, the impact upon the trade would be severe.

One of the reasons why we have got away with it, as it were, this time is that the price has risen for market reasons. Producers in the southern Mediterranean region had a disastrous harvest and they need our grain. As a result, the price is high. Had the price been low, the effect of the £3·37 levy would have been felt. If we had had wheat and barley on the farms at £90 a tonne, the £3·37 levy would have had a very much greater impact.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to resist in the price review any increase in price. Indeed, we would like to see a reduction in price if possible. Secondly, he must change the system whereby the levy is paid at the point of sale. I agree with the hon. Member for East Lothian that the fact that the levy is paid at the point of processing means that in some instances it will not be paid. In some instances, merchants may hold the money and never pay it over, or may do so only unwillingly. If we are to have this awful system, my hon. Friend must try to alter the point of sale. I hope that on these two matters my hon. Friend will get the message through to his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

8.28 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I join those who have criticised the measure that is before us, and my criticism can be boiled down to four reasons. First, I do not like the retrospective element. That is not the way that we do things in the United Kingdom. It is entirely wrong also that we should have only and hour and a half to debate such a major change. Secondly, extra policing will be required by the Ministry. We have introduced the horrible co-responsibility levy, and if the centres of operation of a farm are more than 15 miles apart the undertaking may not mill its own grain without paying the levy, but how will this be monitored? I know that many farmers, not necessarily large ones, have specialist operations that are much more than 15 miles apart. That distance is nothing, especially in the midlands where we have an excellent road system. We in Britain do not like passing regulations that we cannot enforce or monitor. I do not imagine that my hon. Friend the Minister contemplates a large increase in the Ministry's inspectorate as a result of this measure, but I think that he will get it, however. I hope that he will pay especial attention to that consequence.

Thirdly, will it be a fact that any farmer who mills his own produce will have to have a CCL 9 before he can continue to do so? Will he be exempt without an application for a CCL 9?

I shall vote for the measure. I know that the Minister fought against it in Brussels. It is part of a package, but it will be a sad day for farmers when we have a co-responsibility levy such as this. It would be better, as has been said before, and possibly will be said in future, to have a straight price cut. That is the simple approach for the House to adopt.

8.30 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I congratulate the Parliamentary Secretary on his appearance at the Dispatch Box. He has had his baptism of fire—not that there has been much fire from the Opposition. It is clear, looking at the empty Labour Benches, that he will have to consider what is said behind him rather than what is said in front of him.

I have the privilege to represent the constituency in Britain with the highest number of pigs. Indeed, there are more pigs than people. To serve that industry, a number of important compound feed merchants have developed. In our area, there is considerable concern about this levy. The main criticism, as many hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, is that it is unfair. It is not even-handed between one producer and another and, therefore, it distorts the market.

The first matter to which I should like to draw the attention of the Parliamentary Secretary concerns large pig breeders who have been buying considerable quantities of feed from efficient compound manufacturers. They will be put at a distinct disadvantage in competing with pig farmers who mill on the farm. This is discrimination. To make matters worse, I understand that there is an anomaly in the definition of "producer". It was originally assumed that the word meant a producer of cereals, but I understand that it was subsequently resolved that the definition included a livestock producer who did not produce cereals.

The second serious matter is the effect of the levy on the compound feed manufacturer. Undoubtedly, there will be an incentive to expand milling on the farm. This will affect the throughput of manufacturers, their profitability and, inevitably, if the levy continues, employment. It might be said that at £3·37 a tonne, the impact will not be great. The feeling on both sides of the House is that this levy will not achieve the objective of reducing surpluses. At the time of the next price review, there will be considerable pressure to increase the levy substantially. There has been talk in the trade of the levy going up to £10 or £15 per tonne. That would be catastrophic. The distortions and the anomalies will have a frightening and unfair effect on people in the farming and compound feed manufacturing industries.

We realise that the Government fought very hard against this levy. We appreciate that it was part of a package. There is not much that we can do about it at this stage, but we strongly urge my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary and his colleagues, when they go back to the negotiating table, to get rid of the levy and sensibly attack subsidies by policies of set-aside and of price reduction. That course is very important, and I urge it upon my hon. Friend.

8.32 pm

Mr. Donald Thompson: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say that time is short, so I will not have an opportunity to reply to all contributions to the debate. Much of the trade comment in recent weeks and some comments during the debate suggested that we would be better off without a levy. That may be so, but

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the Council agreed that it would be introduced. In view of its potential value in supporting the Community budget and the positive support that it enjoys in the Commission and in other member states, it would be unwise to regard its immediate elimination as a likely option.

I listened carefully to the debate. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister to the wise words of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) who was supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) and also —I thank him for his nice words—by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sunderland (Mr. Maclennan). The hon. Gentleman mentioned co-responsibility levies. The co-responsibility levy on milk continued for a long time and was not adequately supported by other measures. As I said earlier, we must make sure that we support this co-responsibility with other measures, many of which have been trailed during the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) mentioned retrospectivity and the legal action that is in train. He also mentioned audit. The brief on the audit matter that hon. Members received may have misled them. That matter still lies on the table. We are ready to discuss some sort of realistic, cost-effective, simple audit. Simplicity and cost-effectiveness will be difficult to achieve. The hon. Members for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Torney) mentioned poultry with some ferocity. *[Interruption.]* They were not hen-pecked, of course. In real terms, grain prices are 50 per cent. lower than they were 10 years ago, and at present our grain prices are the cheapest in Europe. That does a great deal to make our poultry industry efficient.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) for his clear and well-informed speech which set many matters straight. I listened carefully to what he said about future price reviews and point-of-sale levies. The co-responsibility levy is just one element in the policy that the Community is pursuing in the cereal sector. The Government agree that the levy on its own will not cure the sector's problems. The Community must not forget the crucial importance of maintaining a restrictive approach to overall support. The Community also needs to examine further measures to bring about structural changes which, in one way or another, are inevitable. For better or for worse, we must assume that the levy will continue to apply for some time. Annulling the regulations will do nothing to alter that.

8.36 pm

Mr. Home Robertson: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I join other hon. Members in congratulating the Parliamentary Secretary on the way in which he has tried to hold his untenable position. He has conducted himself with characteristic charm and good humour. I suppose that those qualities have led the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Minister of State to leave him here to face the music.

As I predicted at the beginning of the debate, no one expressed any degree of support for the levy. It is not good enough for people such as the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) to say that they will vote for the levy with a heavy heart. I say, for the benefit of Tory Members, that that kind of cop-out will not do. This levy is damaging to their constituents. They cannot get out of it in this way. We have sought to give the House an opportunity to vote against this useless and, indeed, positively harmful levy. I urge the House to vote for our prayer to revoke the regulations.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 105, Noes 193.

Division No. 308] **[8.38 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim

Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Neil
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maude, Hon Francis
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Rate Support Grant (Scotland)

8.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1986, dated 22nd July 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 24th July, be approved.

The order has two purposes. The first is to reduce the grant payable in respect of 1986-87 by £125·3 million. The second is to adjust the rate support grant payable to Scottish local authorities in respect of 1985-86, the overall effect being an increase of £69·2 million. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced his decision to make these changes in grant in his statement of 23 July and the order was laid the following day.

Local authority current expenditure budgets in Scotland, as measured for comparison with guidelines, come to more than £3,100 million. Thus, even before including their capital expenditure programmes, which are substantial, local authorities account for about half the expenditure for which my right hon. and learned Friend is responsible. That is a very large sum by any standards. I will not detain the House with a recital of our general policy on public expenditure. That policy, and the reasons for it, are well known. So is the success which it is achieving. The continued success of the policy will depend in some measure on our continuing to exercise careful control of local authority expenditure. In 1978-79, the year before we took office, the volume of local authority current expenditure grew by almost 7 per cent. from the previous year. Therefore, in 1978-79, local authorities increased their expenditure by 7 per cent. more than the amount required to cover increased costs.

We have now, after seven years' hard effort, stabilised the volume of expenditure. Local authorities' budgets for 1986-87 show a small reduction — in volume terms — compared with 1978-79. This is welcome and demonstrates the good sense of an increasing number of local authorities. This increasingly responsible approach by local authorities has enabled us to make the generous and realistic provision for the next financial year, 1987-88, which my right hon. and learned Friend also announced on 23 July.

However, this is no time to slacken our efforts to keep spending under control, and indeed the greater the number of local authorities that are willing to play by the rules, the more important it is that their efforts should not be jeopardised by a few irresponsible authorities. Penalties for overspending will therefore continue to have an important role until the new system of local government finance, set out in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", is in place.

Before I go any further, I should say something in general terms about the penalty system. I do not like it any more than do the local authorities, nor I suppose any more than Opposition Members, whose colleagues set up the system in the 1970s. But I must recognise, as did the Labour Government of that time, that expenditure has to be contained within the levels of provision that the Government have made. The penalties system is therefore designed as a righting mechanism which will put this aspect of public expenditure back on course, when a breach is threatened; and the penalty tariffs provide a strong disincentive for sensible and reasonable authorities attempting the breach in the first place. All that has changed since the Labour Government introduced the idea is that the system now operates in a much more selective and fairer way. Previously, grant abatement affected all authorities whether or not they were high spenders. Now abatements are related clearly to the extent of an individual authority's overspend and those that keep within guidelines are unaffected by it.

The majority of authorities take heed of the guidelines that the Government set for them. The number of authorities budgeting within guidelines stood at 15 in 1984-85. This increased to 30 in 1985-86 and to 40 in the current year out of a total of 65. Several more are only just over guideline. This is clearly relevant to the Government and to the ratepayers who benefit directly from it. There remains, however, a hard core of authorities that spend well in excess of guidelines. In total, Scottish local authorities planned overspend for 1986-87 is £118 million or 3·9 per cent. Only four authorities account for £107 million or 90 per cent. of this overspend. It is right that the consequences of their action should be brought home to them and that penalties should be concentrated on those authorities. Our arrangements ensure this. I will have more to say in a moment about those authorities.

I shall now deal with the details of the order. The order falls into two parts. First, it reduces rate support grant for 1986-87 for those authorities which have planned to overspend. The needs element of rate support grant has been reduced by £125·3 million. This reduction is concentrated entirely on the 25 overspenders. As for last year, a tariff has been applied relating the reduction in grant to the overspend. This year the tariff starts at zero and rises to a reduction of 10 per cent. of the overspend for a 1·5 per cent excess. It then rises more steeply to 70 per cent. for a 3 per cent. excess and more steeply again to 110 per cent. for an excess of 3·5 per cent. or more. Annex 2 of the report contains a graph of the tariff and the calculations of penalties for individual authorities. The penalties are listed in column 7 of page 9.

The four authorities which I mentioned earlier will attract 94 per cent. of the penalty. I emphasise that it is, of course, still possible for them to recoup those penalties for their ratepayers, by reducing their overspends, and hence their penalties, at outturn. For example, an authority with a budget overspend of 6 per cent. which then halves its excess will have its penalty cut by two thirds. If it reduces its excess to 2 per cent. the penalty will be reduced in cash by 90 per cent. There is still time for those authorities to take the necessary steps, and if they do so they will be acting clearly in the interests of their ratepayers. I hope that they will take heed of this opportunity and I urge Opposition Members, if they have the ratepayers' interests at heart, to join me in urging those authorities to revise their expenditure plans now. They have of course had full notice of our intentions since 23 July, and should have been planning revised budgets since then. Indeed, in the past local authorities have reduced their expenditure substantially at outturn as indeed they did last year.

In fact, turning to the second part of the order, the effectiveness of grant penalties is demonstrated by the return of provisional outturn for 1985-86. At the budget stage 30 authorities kept within guidelines and the total overspend was £90·7 million. Provisional outturns show 37 authorities within guideline and the total overspend down to £47·2 million. The effect of this is to bring penalties

down from £126·6 million to £57·4 million, a saving of £69.2 million. Authorities, I am glad to say, clearly took heed of our exhortations. I was particularly pleased to see that Edinburgh came down to guideline last year after our selective action to reduce its rates, though it subsequently submitted a grossly extravagant budget for 1986-87, thus bringing selective action on itself again.

Details of the 1985-86 penalties are given in annexes 3 and 4 to the report. For those authorities affected, the revised penalties are shown in column 7 on pages 12 and 13 with the adjustments that will be made to grant payments in column 9.

On 23 July, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced the totals for relevant current expenditure provision and aggregate Exchequer grant for 1987-88. In recognition of the efforts made by increasing numbers of authorities to come down to guideline, provision was set at local authority budgets, adjusted for the interim teachers' pay award, plus 3·75 per cent., a total figure of £3,277 million. Aggregate Exchequer grant was set at £2,160 million. On 1 October we issued current expenditure guidelines to all authorities. The effect of those decisions is that there is in general no reason for rate increases next year, unless local authorities increase their spending above inflation or fail to bring their spending to guideline in the current year.

The generous overall settlement means that no authority can claim that its guideline is unattainable. Every authority has a guideline which is at least a real terms freeze on its present guideline and no authority is being asked to make a cash reduction on its present budget. Several authorities have made representations to us because they have been set guidelines below assessed need in the past. The number of authorities with guidelines below assessed need has been reduced from 30 to 19; for most of those still below assessment the gap has been narrowed and for none is it wider. It is now up to the local authorities to respond by budgeting within those guidelines. I give authorities due warning that any that do not do so will face severe penalties again next year.

Hon. Members may be wondering whether the order we are considering this evening has any implications for the discussions now taking place on teachers' pay. There are two points to make. If a settlement of the teachers' dispute is reached on the basis proposed by my right hon. and learned Friend, the costs of an additional 8·2 per cent. on the pay bill from January to March 1987—that is the part of the financial year we are dealing with in this order — will be met fully by additional provision and a corresponding increase in grant. There would be a further order in respect of the grant.

Secondly, we have indicated our willingness to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' request for a disregard in respect of £27 million of expenditure it estimates to incur this year as a result of the interim pay award of April 1986, and which is in excess of its budgeted provision. In fact, my right hon. and learned Friend and I had a useful meeting yesterday with representatives of COSLA. They were worried about the threat of renewed disruption in the classrooms if the teachers do not accept my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals for settling the dispute. The Government share that concern.

My right hon. and learned Friend's proposals are generous, offering teachers a prospect of average increases of 30 per cent. between April 1985 and October 1987. What is of concern for us tonight is the consequences for rates. COSLA obviously shares that concern and is, so far as I am aware, entirely content with our proposals, which I have mentioned, on disregard and on additional resources and grant.

Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend and I were also encouraged yesterday by COSLA's clear agreement on the need to secure a proper deal covering conditions of service, its concern to avoid further disruption in the classrooms, and its concern to take all possible steps within the limits of my right hon. and learned Friend's offer to secure a settlement to the dispute. We regard COSLA as having a major responsibility in the weeks ahead in encouraging the teachers to consider my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals in a moderate and sensible way.

Grant penalties are an essential part of the present system of local government finance. We inherited them from the Labour party and have made them fairer and more effective. In the present system of local government finance the disparity between those who pay rates and those who vote requires this form of constraint on local authority spending. The new system that we shall shortly introduce will be designed to improve local accountability and to remove the need for such penalties. Meanwhile, we must work within the present system. I hope that authorities which have bugeted above guideline will try to reduce their excesses. Given both the level of provision and guidelines, no authority will have an excuse for budgeting over guideline next year and thus creating a greater burden on their ratepayers. It is my sincere hope that they will not. I commend the order to the House.

9.4 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): There is, I am afraid, a certain familiarity about these debates. We have heard it all before from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. The most depressing thing was his suggestion that he might have the opportunity of making another such speech. I sincerely hope—"sincerely" was overused in his speech — that that turns out to be unfounded.

The trouble is that the Government have got it wrong over a number of years, but they persist in their error. There is always a danger of a certain resigned acceptance among Opposition Members: Ministers are incorrigible, they are set in their ways and the only hope is that at some reasonably early date they will be summarily dismissed. That is an understandable feeling on Opposition Benches, but we have a duty to argue the case and explain and underline our opposition to the order and the general abatement that it represents.

We are discussing a form of penalty. The Minister engagingly referred to its origins under a Labour Government, but I suggest that there is one large distinction. That is that it is now being used with particular relish which, on occasions, amounts almost to venom. It has done a great deal to destroy any chance of a working relationship between the Government and local authorities. There has been scant regard for principle and, more importantly, for the needs of the community which, to some extent, depend upon the services provided by local government.

The trouble is that the penalty is based on arbitrary guidelines and is set at a level that follows no obvious or logical pattern. This year we are being asked to claw out of the budgets halfway through the financial year the

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substantial sum of £125 million. We are entitled to protest about the impact and about the wrong-headed approach that the Government are displaying.

I am glad that the Minister referred to the difficulties over teachers' pay. That gives an air of particular uncertainty to what is happening at the moment. Not only are local authorities suffering from the cumulative pounding of recent years but one of their major items of expenditure under the rate support grant settlement is clouded in uncertainty. We know that the teachers' salary bill is likely to be £500 million or more, but no one knows how much more, or what will happen.

I am glad to see the Secretary of State in his place. He knows that I make no secret of the fact that we have been dismayed by the recent turn of events. I understand and recognise that there was a meeting yesterday between COSLA and the Secretary of State. It is taking the artificial conventions of dialogue beyond any useful point to describe it as a useful meeting. Having talked to some of those who were at it, I have not been given that impression. What appears to have happened—I regret this as well—is that COSLA was told in no uncertain terms that any initiative that it might want to pursue in terms of the financial aspects of the package was ruled out with a finality that does something to snuff hope of an early solution to the problem.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The hon. Gentleman will, I presume, have read the reported remarks of Councillor Fagan, the president of the convention, this morning. He said that suggestions that had come from some quarters that the local authorities might top up the costs of the Main report above the level of phasing proposed by the Government were, in his word, "preposterous".

Mr. Dewar: I have spent much time in the past 24 hours not only with Councillor Fagan but with several other local government figures who were at the meeting. Whether it is preposterous or not, let us get it on the record and clarify the situation. As I understand it—if I have misunderstood, it is important that that is made clear—even if there was such an intention or willingness to consider that possibility, the right hon. and learned Gentleman made it clear that it would not be allowed and that COSLA was told in no uncertain terms that it would meet the strongest possible opposition, and a series of barriers, financial and otherwise, which would rule out that possibility.

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to confirm that. That is indeed what I said. I also asked the convention whether it wanted to support the suggestion of the convenor from Dumfries and Galloway region, which was that local authorities might wish to finance the difference between the phased award and a full immediate payment. I was told that, irrespective of the Government's view, the convention did not wish to put forward such a proposal.

Mr. Dewar: I am aware that Councillor Jameson of Dumfries and Galloway, who is not a member of my Parliament — sorry, party — *[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Gentleman can laugh—he is entitled to do so—but I take these things fairly seriously in view of the crisis. I am aware that that idea has been floated. I do not speak for COSLA, and it would not be right for me to say what COSLA's attitude on these matters is, but I am clear that it sought to establish the Government's stance.

Irrespective of whether COSLA would have considered such an initiative, the right hon. and learned Gentleman and I are at one, at least, in establishing that the Government rule out that possibility. The major role for COSLA, which the Under-Secretary of State referred to, in the Government's mind at least, is simply to support the Government's departure from the financial package in the Main report. That seems a strange way in which to treat a group who are the employers and which, when, as we all hope, there is a settlement, will be faced with funding a substantial proportion of the costs.

One thing is clear. The Government have set up a confrontation—I regret that—by the decision on the Main report which was announced recently. As for local government, the Secretary of State is determined that nobody will rescue him from that confrontation. My earnest hope is that parents, pupils and the education system will not be asked to pay too high a price for the Treasury's intransigence and possibly the right hon. and learned Gentleman's pride.

On the 1986-87 figures, we are all aware that some £27 million is part of the financing of the 5·5 per cent. interim settlement and has not been budgeted for in the present figures. I am aware that there was an agreement that if a settlement was reached that sum would be disregarded in terms of penalities and measurement against guidelines.

I take it from what the Under-Secretary of State said that, even if, sadly, we do not reach a settlement in the teachers' dispute in the near future, that £27 million will be fully disregarded. I put that to him because my impression as a result of talking to people who were at the COSLA meeting—I am sure that it may just have been a misunderstanding—was that that was not clear to them.

I want to know quite clearly whether the £27 million—the fag-end of the 5·5 per cent. pay increase—will be disregarded, whatever happens to the teachers' dispute. I take that to be the case from the Minister's remarks. If I am wrong, I hope that he will intervene. He does not, so I take it that I am right. I am grateful for that, and I think that COSLA will be as well. I put it to the Minister—I am right about that?

Mr. Ancram: Wait until my reply.

Mr. Dewar: We shall wait for the hon. Gentleman's reply with more interest than usual.

I must move on as there are other important matters to consider, although they do not have quite the same sharp topicality. The Minister argued that the penalties have been working and have done a great deal to restrict local government expenditure. Reasonably, from his point of view, the Minister drew attention to the fact that some £69 million of the clawback for the previous financial year has been paid back. There is, of course, an impact as a result of that type of penalty. Most extortion rackets have an impact on their victim. Of course local authorities have been forced to cut services. They have been forced to contemplate retrenchment when often social need demands expansion, but that is no defence for this form of policy. It is equally irrelevant to say that the

Government are penalising only 25 authorities when those authorities represent 73 per cent. of total local government expenditure in Glasgow.

I was not clear about the four authorities that together account for £107 million of the £125 million. I make it three authorities, but perhaps simple arithmetic is not the Minister's strong point—*[Interruption.]* That may also apply to myself, but I think that at least I have got it right.

I speak for every Labour Member when I say that it is unreasonable to expect the Strathclyde region to find £76 million of savings within its budget this year. Inevitably, when that is squashed into the last six months of the year it will put jobs at risk and threaten services. It will mean that the delivery of those services that can be maintained will be dangerously stretched. These are not theoretical matters or some sort of accountancy exercise. This is a threatening situation for those who are working on the ground and those who rely on such services.

Similarly, it is right to say that the situation in Lothian is thoroughly unsatisfactory to many people who have nothing to do with my political standpoint. Lothian has been penalised by £25 million, yet the Minister knows that that penalty is based upon a Conservative budget. The author of this profligacy and financial irresponsibility is Councillor Brian Meek and his Conservative colleagues. The Minister is somewhat hard on poor Councillor Meek who, after all, is an electoral victim of the Government's well-earned unpopularity — despite Councillor Meek's efforts to distance himself from the Government. It is a bit hard that he should now be condemned by Ministers for overspending. It is even harder on the people of Lothian who will see the cuts biting and taking effect.

My own city of Glasgow, which is penalised by £5·5 million, has enormous problems that are self-evident and pressing. I need not say much about them tonight, because they are in the mind of every hon. Member who represents a Glasgow constituency. It is extremely sad that we should be faced with these additional and quite unnecessary problems.

A fourth authority that is quite outwith the figures that the Minister mentioned is Edinburgh, which finds itself in a very odd situation. It has been penalised under section 5 of the 1966 Act. That is odd, because most of us thought that the section 5 procedure was no longer relevant and that it would not be used. It was, and the strange comparators of Kirkcaldy and Motherwell resulted in a difficult situation where the excess over guidelines at £9·6 million was reduced by agreement to £6·3 million.

To anyone following these matters carefully that would mean that the penalty would come down from £10·6 million to £3·6 million. That is a reasonable assumption, but, predictably, with this Government it turns out to be unsound. In fact, the penalty remains at £10·5 million and the gap of almost £7 million will have to be closed by borrowing during the year until the money that we all know will ultimately be repaid is repaid by Government. The result will be an additional charge, which in terms of interest rates will, I am told, be about £750,000. To me that is a Gilbertian situation that is impossible to defend. There is no real excuse for it.

The Minister knows that he will have to pay that money back. There was plenty of time because the adjustment that led to the diminution on the excess over guidelines was agreed on 18 June, yet the order was not laid until 24 July. I am advised that there is no legal impediment as that would have prevented the logical and sensible step of calculating the penalties on the reduced excess over guidelines being followed. The outcome will be an additional burden on the ratepayer that is not needed. I am afraid that the reason is a rather vindictive approach to the particular problems of Edinburgh.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. This is an important point, and I am sure that he would wish to be fair. As he knows, penalties are drawn on budgets, and penalties that follow in the given financial year come from the budgets and can be readjusted on outturn if the expenditure is either lower or higher than that budgeted for. The hon. Gentleman is in effect making the case that Edinburgh, which set a very high budget because of the series of procedures, has now reduced its expenditure and, therefore, should attract a reduced penalty during this financial year. Would the hon. Gentleman be happy for Edinburgh to have that reduced penalty, in the knowledge that other authorities, such as Strathclyde, which may also make reductions in its expenditure during the current year, will have to suffer the same penalties as it suffers now that it will obtain the reduction only, as in Edinburgh's case, when the outturn is known?

Mr. Dewar: That is a very feeble argument. All my hon. Friends understand that there is a clear distinction to be drawn. Strathclyde may or may not make reductions, perforce, during the financial year, but we shall not know whether it does so until the outturn figures are known. We know that there has been a big reduction in Edinburgh. Both rates and expenditure have been adjusted, but that applied well before the order was laid.

If the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State is asking me, triumphantly, whether I should be happy if Edinburgh were treated in this way and whether, by implication, that would be unfair to other authorities, the answer is that I should be happy if Edinburgh were treated in that way. I am sustained in that view by the fact that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities unanimously—I stress and underline the word "unanimously", because it included all political groupings—backed Edinburgh on this point. Therefore, to pray in aid unfairness to other local authorities when they want the Minister to come into line with logic and reality seems to me to be very poor.

The Minister said that he has been able to be more generous than he was in 1985-86 regarding clawbacks. I suppose that the argument is that the robbery has been committed again but that the take is considerably smaller. That is very doubtful. The Minister will have seen COSLA's figures. The budgets, in volume terms, of three of the largest authorities have been taken for 1986-87 and the increase over 1985-86 has been calculated. The increase in penalty between 1985-86 and 1986-87 has then been examined.

In Glasgow's case, between 1985-86 and 1986-87 the budget, in volume terms, dropped by 2·7 per cent., but the penalty increased by 3·8 per cent. In Strathclyde, the budget, in volume terms, decreased by 2·5 per cent., but the penalty increased by 12 per cent. In Lothian there was an increase, in volume terms, but it was very modest—0·3 per cent. However, the penalty increased by 190 per cent. That represents a very large vote of no confidence in the Minister's complacent defence. This is thoroughly unsatisfactory. The clawbacks are unnecessary, in the

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circumstances, in that they are unsound in their methodology and unpredictable and capricious in their consequences.

I welcome the fact that the basis for the compilation of guidelines for 1987-88 has been changed. The basis will be the budgets for the previous year, plus an inflation rate of 3½ per cent. We shall dispute whether that is an adequate percentage figure to apply. However, I welcome the fact that the previous year's budget is now being used as the basis for calculating the guidelines.

If the guidelines for 1987-88 are priced back to 1986-87, and if the abatement penalty in this order is then applied, one discovers that the total penalty to be paid is only £12 million, not £125 million. That puts into perspective some of the hysterical charges that are still being made in Government circles.

To put that proposition even more clearly and relevantly, we are in the quite extraordinary position that next year's guidelines will be based upon this year's budget, plus inflation. That is believed by the Minister to be a reasonable basis for next year's expenditure. However, the same base budget starting point for this year is attracting a massive penalty of £125 million. There is no conceivable explanation for that policy. The only difference is the addition of an inflation factor. Next year it will be completely acceptable, although this year it is believed to be financially irresponsible.

If one looks at the fine detail, is it not extraordinary that three of the 25 authorities that have been penalised have budgeted for expenditure in 1986-87 that is less than their assessed need? Much good it has done them, because at the end of the day they are to be penalised, together with the other authorities. It is an illogical, depressing but, I am afraid, an all too typical performance by this Government, and we shall certainly vote against the order tonight.

9.24 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): It is very nice that many Opposition Members have come tonight to listen to reality rather than to what we have heard in the past 20 minutes. I welcome the order.

Year by year, I have complained, but tonight I want to thank my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government. For ages I have felt that rural areas with a reputation for good housekeeping have been penalised by some obscure, incomprehensible formula. Tonight, at last, reality has prevailed and some of the figures that I shall mention are certainly welcome.

I find the observations of COSLA most unhelpful. It would be of benefit to local authorities if they tried to work a little harder with Government instead of trying to oppose everything root and branch. If COSLA showed a little leadership instead of a great deal of self interest, Scotland would benefit enormously from constructive advice. But all we get is pages of criticism in the document that they have sent us. With an attitude like that it is no wonder that nobody in Scotland wants an Assembly.

I wish to consider annex 2 of the guidelines. I am glad to note that Dumfries and Galloway has an 11·6 per cent. increase in its guideline. That is the highest increase in Scotland. Indeed, that is good news for south-west Scotland and a just reward for sensible finance over many years. The district councils within Dumfries and Galloway——

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): The hon. Gentleman is taking the same line as the Minister. He speaks as if this was just part of a balance sheet in a vacuum. What does he know of the effect that these cuts have had on the services to which people are entitled? Those services have been drastically reduced and, in some cases, completely destroyed. That is the other side of the legend.

Sir Hector Monro: The right hon. Gentleman must not exaggerate in his usual way. It is ridiculous to say that services have been completely destroyed because obviously they have not. I wish that he would realise that the root cause of most local authority problems is that they over-budget. Their budgets are high up in the clouds, and when they must reduce those budgets they talk of cuts. The budgets are merely being reduced back to reality.

The four district councils within Dumfries and Galloway have all had an increase of 9·5 per cent. which is the fifth highest in Scotland. That will, indeed, be most welcome. It shows that the formula is now weighted much more favourably towards authorities which have tried to keep within their guidelines and have not overspent in the past or planned to do so in future.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As I read the calculations, if one put next year's guideline for Nithsdale, for example, in real terms for the present financial year, Nithsdale would not incur a penalty. How can the hon. Gentleman justify Nithsdale incurring a penalty this year when on an equivalent level of expenditure next year it will not incur a penalty?

Sir Hector Monro: I am welcoming the fact that Nithsdale has an increase of 9·5 per cent. for the year. That is something which both the local authority and I welcome.

We are discussing budgeting tonight, and it is important to realise that, in real terms, local authorities are spending more now than in 1979. That shows that there has been a steady increase in expenditure in real terms. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) held up his hands in horror and said that Strathclyde could make no savings at all when it is £76 million over budget, which is incredible in local authority financing.

There is no more important issue than the serious position of education in relation to the teachers. We must try to resolve that as soon as possible. I was extremely disappointed at the attitude of the teaching profession and the view taken by the newspapers at the weekend. To say, as the Educational Institute of Scotland seemed to say, that Main is dead is absolute rubbish. It is a good report and we must use it as a basis for settlement.

Earlier this year, my right hon. Friend broke the log jam by setting up the Main committee to produce a report —something that the Opposition did not think possible. My right hon. Friend and the Main committee set a fine example to England, which will welcome the committee's recommendations as much as the House did.

So much seems to depend on the argument whether or not the package is indivisible, in the sense that pay and conditions of service must go together, as the Main committee recommended. I am firmly of the opinion that pay and conditions of service go together and are indivisible. If we are trying to find a solution, it is not so ludicrous to think that we can phase in pay and conditions of service. Surely we can rise above the nit-picking of the

EIS, which said that because it did not get the whole lot by 1 October it would not consider the Main committee recommendations.

The EIS did not like the conditions of service and jumped at the opportunity to reject the report. I trust that teachers and Opposition Members will look at the pay proposals carefully. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland achieved the 16·4 per cent. from the Treasury recommended by Main—8·2 per cent. to be paid at the end of next month and 8·2 per cent. in October next year. That is on top of the 5·5 per cent. paid in April and the 9 per cent. in 1985-86. That is very nearly 30 per cent. in less than three years. What other profession has been offered nearly 30 per cent. during the past three years, or even the past five years? The offer is worth the most careful consideration as it is an increase far above the rate of inflation and, importantly, an increase that recognises the worth of the profession, as recommended by Main. I certainly welcome the Main recommendations.

Sadly, the teachers seem to be in orbit about the phasing in of the award. May I remind Opposition Members about Clegg, which is often held up as the key to all educational advance? That was phased in in two stages. In 1984, the armed forces award of 7·6 per cent. was also phased in in two stages. In 1984, doctors and dentists achieved 6·9 per cent. — not the 16·4 per cent. recommended for teachers—and that was phased in in two stages. In 1985, nurses' pay was reviewed and the award phased in also. In 1984, the Top Salaries Review Body's recommendations were phased in.

Surely teachers could not have expected the 16·4 per cent. award to be paid on 1 October while they are working to rule or even on strike. Surely they should have been prepared to give much more consideration to the recommendations.

Hon. Members should look at what Main has offered by way of salary increases. As the hon. Member for Garscadden rightly said, such increases have a great deal to do with this order because the money has to come from the rate support grant. Under the proposals, the average salary of a primary school teacher will be £12,300. A secondary teacher will receive £13,745, and 60 per cent. of secondary school teachers will receive over £13,700. For head teachers it rises to £28,500. Those are significant increases and they should have been welcomed by the profession. Only 2 per cent. of teachers in Scotland would receive less than £8,000. We should bear in mind as well that 33 per cent. of all secondary teachers will have over £15,000. The teachers should not have turned down this settlement but should have given it much more careful thought than they have.

The huge sum which will come from taxpayers and ratepayers towards this settlement gives a wonderful chance to the profession to enter into a new era. The teaching profession desperately needs leadership from the EIS in an effort to find a solution. The EIS seems to have its head in the sand because it refuses to give leadership. It says it will depend on a ballot and will not give a firm indication of all the advantages available to the teaching profession in this recommendation.

I hope that teachers will read the reports of the debate and take on board what is on offer and pay less heed to what they have so often been told by the Opposition. Children and parents have gone through a miserable period. The future of our children depends on qualifications obtained at school and it is high time they had an opportunity to reach their full potential. I hope that the EIS will come off the fence and will negotiate through the proper channels in an effort to resolve the dispute. The Secretary of State has played a brilliant and constructive part in reaching this point. It is now up to the teachers to come forward and reach a settlement.

9.38 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I appreciate the need of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) to get something on record about the teachers' dispute so that it can be reported in next week's *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* and the *Moffat News and Times*. In so doing he went somewhat wider than the terms of the debate. I shall try to keep my remarks about that dispute within the terms of the debate. Today I met representatives from COSLA and discovered that there would be no scope for COSLA or for individual local authorities to reach a separate settlement. The Secretary of State assures me that the Government do not want that either and in that sense there seems to be some agreement.

COSLA is confused about the future of the rate support grant relative to the interim settlement that has already been agreed. I noted that the Under-Secretary of State did not give an immediate response when invited to do so and we look forward to hearing what he has to say on that point because that problem is greatly exercising the minds of local authorities.

In the report attached to this order there is a reference to 1985 orders Nos. 3 and 4. Presumably that means that Nos. 1 and 2 went before. A feature of the rate support grant is the system of penalties and guidelines that the Government operate in a fairly hard-line way. That means that time and again they have to come back to the House for topping-ups and taking-aways.

In introducing the order the Minister seemed like an early-day Santa Claus trying to pretend that he was giving £69 million back to local authorities for 1985-86. However, he was only giving back what he had taken away in one of these orders that we debated last year. In the interim period the local authorities that have lost that money have had to pay interest on it. With interest running at the rate of 10 to 11 per cent. I estimate that that represents a loss of £7·6 million to the ratepayers of the local authorities concerned. Because the system operates inflexibly, that is a loss to the ratepayers.

There is a suggestion that the guidelines are invested with some sort of magic. We are told that they are not intended to be mandatory, but because of the way in which the system works, they are, to all intents and purposes, just that. The Minister assures us that the total is one of those odd things, and is nothing to do with the sum of the parts. I have discussed with the Minister the individual guidelines for services with regard to the police allocation. He and I were in substantial agreement, but I was assured that that was not what that local authority was expected to spend on the police. Nevertheless, when everything was added up, the local authority had to stay within the total sum. Consequently, the individual parts bore no relation to the sum which would, nevertheless, be binding on the local authority.

It has been pointed out that if next year's guidelines were converted into real terms for the current year they would show a minimal overspend, resulting in a penalty of about £12 million rather than £125 million. Indeed, if the Edinburgh anomaly is taken into account, the penalty

[Mr. James Wallace]

would be £5 million instead of £125 million. The hon. Member for Dumfries did not pick up that point with regard to Nithsdale. This year it has no doubt been accused of irresponsible overspending in incurring penalty, despite the fact that the same spending next year would in real terms be the height of financial rectitude and would not incur penalty. Furthermore, this year it is incurring a penalty for spending a sum that does not even meet its assessed need on the Government's own estimate. The hon. Gentleman did not comment on that, although I gave him the opportunity to do so. I am sure that his electors will take due note of that.

Under this order, 25 local authorities are now to be penalised. We are not simply talking about penalising local authorities, because that burden will be passed on to the ratepayers, and will often affect the services provided by those authorities. The Government cannot raise the spectre of irresponsible, high-spending authorities for much longer. Three of the local authorities to be penalised tonight have an assessment of expenditure need — the Government's own assessment — that is greater than their guideline. Some authorities that spend the same in real terms next year will not be deemed irresponsible high spenders.

Reference has been made to the Lothian region, and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out that a Conservative administration had put forward a budget that incurred penalty. I am sorry that he did not also pick on the alliance. I would plead guilty as well, because it was a Conservative administration in alliance with the Liberals and Social Democrats that put forward that budget, because they did not feel that they could cut their expenditure any further. That shows that we are now reaching the bone. Most of the fat has been cut away, and the Government now expect local authorities to dig into the bone in order to meet their arbitrary spending guidelines.

The Government are obsessed with public expenditure. The Minister did the House a service by saying that he would not go into detail again on the Government's policy on public expenditure. We all know it well, but their obsession leads to rough justice, as is demonstrated by the order.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive an Englishman for intervening in this debate — *[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Gentleman spare a word for the taxpayer who has to fund these feckless Scottish local authorities?

Mr. Wallace: With due respect, I forgive an Englishman many things, but we are no longer dealing with feckless and irresponsible local authorities. It has been admitted today that local authorities are now spending less in total volume terms than in 1978-79. Indeed, some of the local authorities penalised in the order are spending substantially less in volume terms than in 1978-79.

The guidelines reveal a lack of flexibility. The hon. Member for Garscadden has already mentioned the anomaly relating to Edinburgh, and so I shall not dwell on that. But I had thought that the Minister would argue that he could not have done anything about it for legal reasons. I was astounded by his answer that there was no legal impediment, and that it was just another arbitrary decision.

There is a distinction between Edinburgh and other local authorities because Edinburgh's budget was agreed in plenty of time for fixing a penalty. Interest charges on that sum will have to be borne by Edinburgh's ratepayers.

The city of Aberdeen is an example of the Government's inflexibility because under the order it will suffer a penalty. Central Government lacked comprehension of what was going on and what was needed when oil was booming. The Government now lack sensitivity about Aberdeen's problems caused by the recession in the oil industry. Job losses are today running at a level which it was predicted would apply by the middle of next year.

Strains and pressures are put upon a local authority when it has to cope with a less buoyant economy. This is a time when one might expect to look to central Government for support, but instead such authorities are penalised further. That leads to cuts which result in even more job losses and a further spiralling down in economic activity.

The anomalies in the guideline system have been well illustrated in tonight's debate. I heave a sigh of relief that my constituency authorities are not to be singled out for penalties. However, the local authorities in my area know that their assessed needs are in excess of their guidelines.

The Minister assured us, as if it were something of which to be proud, that for no local authorities will the gap be any wider. That is not much consolation to local authorities who have been assured that there will be steady progress towards bridging the gap. Very little progress has been made for local authorities in my constituency. They have been prepared to put up with that, but I doubt whether they will be prepared to put up with it for much longer. Ratepayers and services will suffer.

It is incumbent upon any Government which replaces the present Government to restore the relationship between central Government and local government, so that central Government no longer dominates.

The Minister said that he wanted greater local accountability. As a principle, I would not disagree with that, but fundamentally I disagree with the ways in which the Government are going about achieving increased accountability. In social security legislation, the Government are trying to ensure that everyone pays, under the principle that there is no representation without taxation. Many people find that obnoxious.

The proportional representation system at local government level would ensure that local authorities are more representative of the people. That would be a more effective way of controlling expenditure at local level and of reflecting an area's needs. In that way local democracy can best be restored.

9.48 pm

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I regret the need to spend time this evening on discussing the order. I look forward to the day when we have reformed local government expenditure and when such orders are unnecessary. I certainly defend the Minister's action in bringing forward the order because history shows clearly that local authorities will overspend if they are not constrained by central Government. Tonight we are

discussing the latest action by central Government—action started by the Labour party and continued by the present Government.

The evidence is clear. When constraints and pressures are applied by central Government, local authorities are able to contain expenditure without services collapsing and without the great embarrassment about which we have heard so much from the Opposition.

The accusation about cuts in local government expenditure is without foundation. In spite of all that this Government have done over the past seven years, spending in volume terms is higher than it was in 1978-79.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to the pounding that local government in Scotland has received under the Government. If he had been in the House, I wonder what adjectives he would have used to describe the actions of the Labour Government when they made the most swingeing cuts in local government expenditure that there have ever been in the history of Scottish local government.

It would be fair to say that the policy which has been followed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his predecessor has been a successful one.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Tell that one to Strathkelvin district council.

Mr. Hirst: I shall come to that presently, if the hon. Gentleman can contain himself.

The scorn which the hon. Member for Garscadden poured on the policy pursued by the Government is simply not merited. Two years ago, when I was a comparatively new Member of the House, 15 authorities budgeted within guidelines. Last year there were 30, and this year there are 40—many of them controlled by the hon. Gentleman's party—which can start out with a budget that is within guidelines, and 11 authorities are just above guidelines.

When one looks at the provisional outturn for 1985-86, one sees that many of the authorities that budgeted to overspend last year managed to bring their spending back within guidelines. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) is listening, but I shall mention Strathkelvin. It budgeted to spend beyond guidelines last year and I am happy to say that it managed to bring its expenditure not just to guidelines but some thousands of pounds under them. In so doing it avoided any penalty being imposed upon the ratepayers.

I believe in giving credit where credit is due, and I give Strathkelvin credit for planning a budget this year which is only modestly above guidelines and much less of an over-budgeting exercise than was done the previous year.

Mr. Canavan: Before the hon. Gentleman entered this place, I had the privilege of representing part of Strathkelvin district. It is now Labour-controlled and all I hear from the people at the coalface of local government—the councillors—is that they are having to suffer the effects of the Government's cuts in local authority services, housing, and everything else. How on earth will the hon. Gentleman manage to explain that before he is out on his neck at the next general election?

Mr. Hirst: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman has not been listening to the debate. If he chose to go back to his old stomping ground he would see that in the years since I became a Member a great deal more money is being spent on that portion of West Stirlingshire than ever was spent when he was a Member there. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman's former constituents showed good sense in voting the way they did at the last election and I am sure that they will do so next time.

This year's guidelines are fair and reasonable. In percentage terms, they offer local authorities the opportunity of making an increase in real terms in what they can spend, and that is welcome. Moreover, the increasing number of local authorities that are budgeting within guidelines this year is confirmation of the success of my right hon. and learned Friend's policy.

Overshadowing all consideration of rate support grant must be the effect which there would be upon the pattern of spending by local authorities if the teachers accept the proposals that are on offer to them which were announced in the House by my right hon. and learned Friend last week.

I welcome the report which my hon. Friend the Minister gave of his discussions with COSLA. I was sorry that since I was not a fly on the wall I could not intervene in the interesting exchanges between the Secretary of State and the shadow spokesman on Scottish affairs. However, I know which version of events I would be prepared to believe.

I am heartened by the assurance that the Minister has given the House this evening that grant will be provided in full to meet the cost of the settlement which will fall to be borne in the 1986-87 financial year. I hope that teachers in Scottish schools will recognise that a fair and reasonable offer has been made to them when they consider it in the cool of their living rooms rather than in the heat of the staff rooms.

The House should recognise that since my right hon. and learned Friend has been Secretary of State for Scotland he has done a great deal to promote the interests of Scottish teachers and to promote peace, stability and progress in Scotland's schools. It is interesting that what we have heard from Opposition Members so far has fallen short of any recommendation that the terms that have been offered should be rejected. That is something that should be welcomed by all fair-minded Members irrespective of the side of the House on which they sit. Parents and the public generally, either as ratepayers or as taxpayers, will have to find the money to finance the deal. They will be right to expect that the teachers should accept a fair and reasonable offer.

It may sober many people to discover that two thirds of Scotland's teachers will have gross pay of over £1,000 a month. I regret to say that many of my constituents would give their eye teeth for that sort of pay. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said, when we consider what has been achieved for teachers' salaries over the past 30 months, it is clear that they have made progress. It is fair to say also that much more remains within their grasp.

I do not share the synthetic indignation that we have heard from some quarters about the so-called phasing of the pay increases that are part of the offer. I believe that the offer is fair and I am glad to have had the Minister's assurance that the Government will be meeting in full the costs of any of the impact of the settlement in the current financial year in terms of rate support grant.

9.57 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I do not intend to take up the arguments of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) and for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on the teachers' dispute. I would say as a member of the Educational Institute of Scotland, and as secretary of the Westminster branch of the EIS, that I have always been brought up to believe that when gentlemen agree to go to arbitration to put their case for a pay review before an independent tribunal they should agree to accept the findings of the tribunal. There is no use appointing a referee and then saying, "We are not accepting your findings and we shall play the game again", when he does not award the goal to our side.

I say to the Secretary of State that he should pay the money to the teachers now. If he does so, I believe that the teachers will vote in the ballot to end the dispute. If he does not pay the money now, I believe that the teachers, by a majority, will vote for a continuation of the industrial dispute. The right hon. and learned Gentlman has won only half of the battle in the Cabinet. Let him return to the Cabinet and, along with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, win the second half. If he does that, we shall not have a continuation of the industrial dispute in the schools of Scotland and of England and Wales. Secretary of State, pay the money now and let us have a settlement.

I smiled when my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, "We have heard it all before." As a member of this place since 1970, I have heard it all before. Indeed, the speech that I am making now is one that I have made from time to time since 1970. There were occasions when I was not lucky enough to catch the eye of Mr. Speaker or Mr. Deputy Speaker, because in the past there has been more interest in these debates than there appears to be this evening. As a Member with a family local government background, I have always spoken and voted against the rate support grant settlement, and I shall be consistent this evening and take the same course. I have done so irrespective of the party in power.

I shall vote against the settlement with great fervour because this happens to be a Conservative Government. The Tories in Scotland are thin on the ground. In the House they are thinner on the ground. After the next election, they will be even thinner on the ground. But, although the Labour party won the debate in Scotland, and although we are winning the debate in the House, we will be defeated because the result of the Division will be determined by English Members of Parliament, especially those from the south of England, who are all Conservative Members. We see not democracy but a steamrollering of the power of English Tories from the south of England who dominate what is happening to local government in Scotland.

After the next election, if Scotland continues to have a predominantly Labour representation that is dominated by the Tory majority from the south of England, not only the Scottish people but the Labour party will need to examine the situation.

We are dealing with an order to reduce the rate support grant by £125·3 million—from £1,761 million to £1,636 million. Tomorrow the Chancellor of the Exchequer will make his autumn statement—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] According to reports appearing in the various newspapers today, he will say how well the country is doing and how we are going economically from strength to strength. He will not mention that the annual cost of unemployment is about £22 billion—£22 billion to pay people not to work. On average, that is £6,438 for each unemployed person. My district council of Cunninghame is penalised by more than £50,000. We have a cash excess over guidelines of just under £200,000 for 1986-87. But, worse still, in 1985-86, because of over-expenditure on unemployment in the area—an unemployment black spot—the council incurred an initial penalty of about £180,000. Because of that over-spending, we faced a grant penalty of 138 per cent. We now face a revised penalty of more than £400,000 in addition to the £50,000 for this year.

In my constituency of Cunninghame, South the September unemployment figure was 7,295—22·6 per cent. of the insured population. That figure was reached after 17 or 18 fiddles to determine the level of unemployment. In my constituency, the annual cost of unemployment is about £40 million—that is, it costs the Government £40 million to keep just over 7,000 people unemployed in my constituency. That is, on average, £1,553 for every working person in the constituency.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): What does that have to do with the order?

Mr. Lambie: We are discussing a cut in expenditure by local authorities at a time when the Government are prepared to increase expenditure on the unemployed. Local authorities such as mine—Cunninghame district council—spent about £10 million in 1985-86 and about £11 million in 1986-87. That money provides services and employment for the people of the area. The Government are saying to the district council "You are wasting money by spending £10 million or £11 million providing services and employment", yet the local authority is not saying to the Government, "You are prepared to spend £40 million in the constituency to pay people not to work."

Based on the 1986-87 budget, my regional council of Strathclyde has had a penalty of more than £76 million imposed on it. That can only mean a further cut in services and employment, increasing the numbers of the unemployed in Strathclyde. It means an increase in the amount that the Government are prepared to find to keep those people unemployed.

This is why I cannot understand the Government. They attack local councils which are providing services and employment—something that the Government are not prepared to do. I hope that the people of Scotland will recognise that, unless we get people back to work and get the £22 billion which is being wasted on unemployment money spent on building up the country and providing employment and services, we shall never get this country going again. I hope that the one or two decent Tories will vote for the Opposition and oppose the order.

10.7 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I feel compelled to say a few words as an Edinburgh and Lothian Member of Parliament because it is important that we should support my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) in relation to Scotland as a whole and especially the position in Lothian and Edinburgh.

The penalty imposed on Lothian is severe and unjustified. It will destroy jobs and services on a scale that will be damaging to my constituents and, ironically, the constituents of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland — the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) — and the Secretary of State. I must say in passing that I wonder whether the penalties applied to Lothian and Edinburgh have something to do with the feeling that they will be helpful electorally to the Government to try to save the three vulnerable Conservative seats and will force local authorities either to cut services and reduce jobs or to raise rates.

The Secretary of State said from a sedentary position — I am not sure whether it is in *Hansard* — that Edinburgh district council was making a donation to Robert Maxwell, or words to that effect. I say in passing again, because this is not central to the debate, that it would be a disgrace to Scotland if the Commonwealth games company were allowed to go into liquidation. I support Edinburgh district council in its efforts to avert that. I hope that the Government will not hold that against Edinburgh. I believe that, even at this stage, the Government should be prepared to look at the matter again and to avoid the damage to the companies that provided products for the Commonwealth games and the damage to Scotland's reputation and that of its capital city.

I hope that the Government will respond to a narrow point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden about the penalty imposed on Edinburgh district council. That penalty relates to the excess over guidelines which would have prevailed had the district council not reached an agreement with the Secretary of State to reduce its expenditure. It must be unfair, by any test, that Edinburgh should be required to carry a £7 million penalty for an entire year. It must lose perhaps £500,000 on the interest payable on that sum.

I have two questions to which I hope the Government will respond. First, is it true that the Secretary of State has discretion in this matter and that there is no statutory requirement on the Government to penalise Edinburgh in that narrow respect? Secondly, if there is no statutory requirement on the Government to act in that way, will they at least agree to reconsider the matter?

10.11 pm

Mr. Ancram: I wish to comment briefly on some of the points made in the debate. I shall start by congratulating, as I always do on such occasions, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) on giving his rate support grant speech its twice-yearly airing. We look forward to hearing it again in January when we debate the Main settlement order.

I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) for his strong and helpful speech. I am grateful to him for welcoming the guidelines that have been issued to his regional authority. He and I have had some arguments about the way in which the formula worked in his authority, but this year he has seen that my prophecies of last year have been fulfilled. I listened carefully to his comments on the teachers. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not follow him down that road, but I agree with his comments on that matter. Opposition Members may not like the facts, as they showed while my hon. Friend was speaking, but it is only on the facts that sensible decisions can ultimately be reached.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) raised several points. It is surprising to hear someone whom I always considered to be perspicacious say that local authorities cannot make savings in any area without cutting services. I am sure that if he considers his authority and other authorities across Scotland he will discover that savings can be made in some obvious areas where duplication takes place and where other ways of providing the same service to the same standard could be found.

The hon. Gentleman referred to Nithsdale, pleading on behalf of a small rural authority which is below its assessed need. Does he accept that the Government have a responsibility for the overall spending by local authorities in Scotland? If he accepted that, would he suggest that bigger increases should be given to small authorities at the expense of bigger authorities which have higher spending at the moment? That is the logic of his position, and I am sure that when he considers it he will discover that that would not be the case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries was accused by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland of not having considered Nithsdale's case. However, Nithsdale received a budget-to-guideline increase of 6·6 per cent. and a guideline-to-guideline increase of 9·5 per cent. this year. I am sure that Nithsdale will be grateful for the guidelines that have been given.

My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) raised several points. I agree that it is ironic to hear accusations of reductions from Opposition Members. Certainly in terms of capital spending the Labour Government were the major reducers. The difference between this Government and the Labour Government was that we decided that, as a matter of policy and economic responsibility, it was important to keep public expenditure under control. They had to be forced into doing that by the International Monetary Fund because of the profligate spending that had gone before.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) raised many points, one of which was also raised by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). Edinburgh knew precisely what it was doing when it budgeted in March this year. It knew that the penalties were imposed on the budgets struck in March and it knew what would happen if there was selective action and it was required to reduce its budget. Edinburgh knew all that because it had been through the procedure last year. There is no question of Edinburgh being able to say that it was surprised at the way in which the system operates. It would be wrong to tell one authority that it could have its penalty reduced because the Government made it reduce its expenditure and, at the same time, tell other authorities which are reducing their expenditure voluntarily that they must bear the whole penalty until the position is worked out at outturn. If we have a system, it must operate fairly. It is operating fairly in Edinburgh's case and I hope that the hon. Gentlemen will accept that.

The hon. Member for Garscadden also raised the question of Lothian region. The Conservative administration in Lothian region had an outstanding record. It restored Lothian from the financial shambles that Labour had left and reduced expenditure by 12 per cent. in volume terms while maintaining services. The remarkable thing is not so much that the administration was still budgeting over guidelines but that it achieved so much in bringing

[Mr. Ancram]

expenditure under control within that period. It was certainly to the benefit of the ratepayers in my constituency and the constituency of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

I will not give the hon. Member for Garscadden a mathematics lesson. However, I am informed that there are four authorities responsible for the £107 million overspend. If the hon. Gentleman presses me I will take him through all the details. I am sure that he will find that on this occasion his mathematics are less accurate than mine. When the debate is over I shall let him know how those figures are made up.

I think that the hon. Member for Garscadden may have unintentionally misunderstood the basis of the guidelines. He suggested that the guidelines for 1987-88 were based on budgets plus 3·75 per cent. That is true globally, but individual guidelines are based on assessed need. The basis of the general settlement of the resources has enabled us to ensure, among other things, that every authority has a guideline increase of at least 3·75 per cent., a minimum of a freeze in real terms on guidelines. However, there are other guidelines which are increasing by considerably more than that amount.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On that point in relation to Fife, if one backdates the 1987-88 figure it would show Fife to have a current guideline of about £172 million. Fife is being penalised now to the tune of £3 million. However, it would be under the guidelines if one made the relevant adjustment. How can we, as public representatives, explain that bizarre arithmetic to the electorate?

Mr. Ancram: At this hour I am not going to take the hon. Gentleman through the complicated system of how the guidelines are drawn up. It was set out in the letter that was sent to the authorities. If the hon. Gentleman has any problem relating to the basis on which the guidelines for Fife were drawn I shall deal with that for him if he writes to me.

The hon. Member for Garscadden also raised the subject of the teachers. I indicated in my original remarks that we were willing to meet COSLA's request for a disregard in respect of the £27 million expenditure it estimates it will incur this year as a result of the interim pay award of April 1986, which is in excess of its budgeted provision. The hon. Gentleman asked what that meant. That disregard is being offered to COSLA on the understanding that both COSLA and the local authorities continue to work with us to persuade the teachers to avoid further disruption. That is something they are doing at the moment and we would expect all local authorities to be doing that in the future. I am sure that nobody, including Opposition Members, would wish to see further disruption in the classrooms.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister has opened up an important point. He has not clarified the issue, but seems to have clouded it. May I try to understand what I have just been told? First, the £27 million will be disregarded for guidelines purposes, in exactly the same way as it would have been if a settlement of the teachers' dispute had been achieved. Secondly, he has put in the caveat that that is conditional on the authorities continuing to co-operate with the Government, as—he ended by saying—they are doing at the moment. In other words, he is satisfied with the policy that they are following at the moment. He is not looking for anything else. He is not setting any other bench-marks against which to apply a test before agreeing to that disregard.

Mr. Ancram: I accept that definition. I said that so long as local authorities and COSLA continue to try to persuade the teachers not to return to disruption in the classroom, which they are doing at the moment, because it is in nobody's interests to return to disruption in the classroom, the disregard will be payable. As far as I am concerned, that situation exists at the moment, and as long as it continues, the disregard will be payable.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ancram: I have said what I have to say on that, and I hope that hon. Members——

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: —will accept that I am saying that at the moment authorities are, in our view, taking the correct approach to future disruption in schools. On that basis, if they continue to do that, the disregard will be payable when it is appropriate so to do.

Mr. Wallace: I seek further detailed clarification. If it should transpire that some local authorities do not match up to what the Government would expect of them, will the Government discriminate between different local authorities in the disregard, depending on what attitude they strike?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is now beginning to hypothesise. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I said that at the moment authorities — and I hope that Opposition Members take the same view—are concerned to see no resumption of disturbances and industrial problems in the classroom. I hope that Opposition Members will continue to press local authorities to do the same. Local authorities are doing that at the moment and on that basis the disregard would be paid.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: I have said what I have to say, and the hon. Gentleman must allow me to finish my speech.

The final accusation made by the hon. Member for Garscadden and others was that there was something wrong with the principle of reducing rate support grant to control local authority spending. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland made the same point. I say again to the hon. Member for Garscadden that that was not invented by this Government. I was looking at the report on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1976, and I read that the Secretary of State, who I understand to have been the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan),

"has informed local authorities that the amount of grant in the increase order will be reduced by £5 million below what it would otherwise have been. This action has been taken because local authority budget estimates for 1976-77 were still some £45 million in excess of the level assumed by Government in fixing the rate support grant for 1976-77, despite exhortations by the Secretary of State to local authorities to reduce current expenditure in the national interest."

That was the Labour party's view then. The principle is the same today. The system is fairer. On that basis, I ask the House to support the order.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 178, Noes 97.

Division No. 309] **[10.23 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Neil
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Maude, Hon Francis
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gerald Malone and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Freud, Clement
Godman, Dr Norman
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. James Hamilton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1986, dated 22nd July 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 24th July, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Rates (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 21st July, be approved.

That the draft Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 21st July, be approved.

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

That the Highlands and Islands Development Board Area Extension Order 1986, dated 9th October 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 4) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1352), dated 31st July 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 1st August, be approved.

INTERNATIONAL IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES

That the draft International Fund for Ireland (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 27th October, be approved.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

Food and Animal Health

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9453/83 on intra-Community trade in bovine and pig semen, 11403/85 on intra-Community trade in meat products, 6364/86, 6365/86, 6366/86 and 6367/86 concerning draft proposals for a new approach to harmonisation in the field of foodstuffs, and of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's unnumbered explanatory memorandum of 9th July 1986 on food flavourings; and of the Government's intention to pursue agreement to a procedure within the framework Directives which ensures that the interests of Member States are respected in subsequent Commission proposals.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for not giving you notice of my point of order, but is the House competent to decide this measure under Standing Order No. 80(5)?

This is rather a dramatic constitutional measure because it provides the Commission with the power to make regulations without the approval of the Council of Ministers. It takes this power under the provisions of the Single European Act which becomes the law of the land under the European Communities Bill. But that Bill is not yet the law of this land. Could consideration be given over the next few days to whether it is competent for the House to consider an important constitutional measure of this nature under Standing Order No. 80(5) when the powers are derived from the European Communities Bill and the Single European Act, which is not yet the law of this land?

Paragraph 9 of document 6365/86 which is attached to the directive sets the matter out clearly. The document is signed by Lord Belstead. Over the next few days could consideration be given to whether it is lawful for this measure to be considered now when the additional powers being given to the Commission are in a Bill which has not yet received Royal Assent?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am assured that the correct procedures have been followed in relation to the order and that it would be proper for me to put the matter to the House.

Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 80 (Standing Committees on European Community documents), and agreed to.

Unemployment (Jarrow)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

10.38 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I am grateful for the opportunity of the Adjournment debate this evening because this is the 50th anniversary of the Jarrow march. I was born and educated at an elementary school within 200 yards of where that march started.

When those 200 proud men marched from Jarrow they did so, not for an extra bowl of soup or an extra crust of bread, but for the right to work and the dignity of a pay packet rather than the indignity of the means test which prevailed in Jarrow at that time. I can recall those days and the hardships that my parents faced. In those days Jarrow, where poverty was prevalent, was referred to as the workhouse without walls. I have always been proud of the men who took part in the march and of the dignified way in which they conducted themselves.

On 5 October 1986, when the 1986 march was about to leave Jarrow, I spoke to those who were taking part and reminded them of their responsibility, not only to themselves, but to the memory of that procession and to the 4 million unemployed today on whose behalf they were marching.

I want to put it on the record that I am equally proud of those who took part in the 1986 Jarrow march which finished this week and the dignified way in which they conducted themselves, in spite of provocation by certain individuals who should know better. The marchers were referred to as barbarians. It is not what is on a person's head that counts but what is in that person's head. The only barbarians that I can see are in government, who preside over 4 million of our fellow citizens on the dole — that human scrap heap. When Ministers offer to spend a week on the dole to prove that they can suffer the same as anyone else, I remind hon. Members that I spent six months on the dole in Jarrow and I know what it is about. It really annoys me when Ministers come forward with their little gimmicks suggesting that they can spend a week on the dole to prove that the dole is easy.

The 1986 Jarrow marchers have been a credit to all those whom they represented, to the memory of the 1936 crusade and the 4 million unemployed. I would like to put on record my sincere thanks to 10 of my constituents and the others who took part. For the record, I would like to mention my constituents by name: John Badger, Harry Thorn, Lawrence Maloy, Billy Orr, David Melia, Paul Laft, Paul Thomas, Steven Byrne, Wayne Scott and Ken Smith. I would like to pay a special tribute to Simon Osborne and Richard Hasswell, the two lads from Leeds who organised the 1986 Jarrow march.

Some people have said that the 1936 Jarrow march was not political, and the march of 1986 was. The 1936 march was organised by a Labour-controlled council. Four Labour aldermen led the march — David Riley, Paddy Scullion, Jock Hanlon and Joe Symons who later became a Member of this House. There were Tory marchers and the Tory agent at the time marched along. If any Tories had wanted to take part in the 1986 march they would have been welcome. None of the 1986 marchers were vetted for their politics. They were only vetted to ensure that they were out of work and entitled to go on the march. I have no doubt that the marchers would have welcomed

[Mr. Don Dixon]

one or two Tory ex-Cabinet Ministers who shed crocodile tears every time there was a debate on unemployment in the Chamber.

I vividly recall the 1936 march. As a small boy of seven, I saw the marchers leave the town hall. I can recall asking my father why the men were marching. He replied that they were going to London to find work. I asked an innocent boy's question: "Would it not be easier to fetch the work up here where the men are?" That same question could be asked today—50 years later.

Last night I presented a petition on behalf of thousands of people in my constituency. Little did I realise, as I watched the Jarrow marchers leave in 1936, that I would present a petition about unemployment in Jarrow. There is intolerably high unemployment in my constituency, like many other constituencies in the north, the north-west, Wales and Scotland. Our areas are being turned into industrial deserts by the Government's policies. The Government have cut regional aid. Regional aid is not a charity. We do not want charity in our regions. Regional aid is a right. Central Government are obliged to ensure that the regions are cared for. Instead of cutting regional aid, the Government should be increasing it.

My constituency has been devastated by the Government's policies. Unemployment has doubled in my constituency since 1979, when the Government were elected. It has increased from 3,600 to over 8,000. That is the Ministry's massaged figure. The unemployment unit's figure is more than 9,000. According to the Ministry's calculations, it costs more than £6,000 to keep a person on the dole. It costs the Government £51 million a year to keep the people of Jarrow unemployed—yet they talk about cutting public expenditure.

Long-term unemployment has increased fourfold, from 900 to 3,600. I recently received a letter from a constituent, who said:

"I am still unemployed after six years and I have filled in thousands of application forms and been on hundreds of interviews for jobs without success. It is slowly driving me around the bend, and I am under the doctor receiving treatment for severe depression . . . You see, Sir, the unemployed have no one to fight for them. I feel isolated and a cast-out, so they (DHSS etc.) can do what they like with them, and I think it's a disgrace, in this present day and age, if they get away with it. I realise you will be very busy etc. but myself and other unemployed rely on someone important to help or we will all be crushed into the earth."

That man is genuinely unemployed—he is not trying it for one week, then returning to a plush job and a big house. He has written for hundreds of jobs, had many interviews, but is still unemployed.

Under-25 unemployment has risen sixfold from 500 to more than 2,900. As I have said before, I have been unemployed on numerous occasions. It was no consolation when standing in the dole queue for someone to tap me on the shoulder and say, "You are all right this week Don, you are only one of 17 per cent.—last week you were one of 18 per cent." When someone is unemployed, he is 100 per cent. unemployed when there are no jobs available.

Since 1979 there has been not simply a loss of jobs in my constituency, but a haemorrhage. Swan's Hebburn shipyards of Hawthorn Leslies and Palmers in 1979 employed almost 3,000 people; today they employ five on maintenance work at Palmers. Hawthorn Leslies has closed. The Mercantile Dry Dock used to employ 305 men, but has now closed; the British Steel Corporation used to employ 306 men, but has closed; Boldon pit used to employ 900 men, but has closed; British Steel Brickworks used to employ 117, but has closed. Reyrolles employed 4,261 but now employs only 985. The list is endless.

This Government have done what Hitler's bombers failed to do during the war—they have stopped industry in Jarrow. It is a shipbuilding community and, like mining communities, is closely knit. Yards have been closed without regard to the social consequences. The march in 1936 was because of Shipbuilding Securities Limited, an organisation of merchant bankers, shipbuilders and shipowners who, because of over-capacity in the industry, decided to buy the yards and close them. The same thing was done by Graham Day, the past chairman of British Shipbuilders, at the behest of the Government.

For the first time in living history there is no shipbuilding on the south side of the river Tyne. To add insult to injury, a modern prefabricated shed built in Palmers and equipped by British Shipbuilders is now being used to store surplus grain. Instead of building ships to take the grain to the starving millions in Africa, we are storing grain. That is the obscenity of this Government.

Local authorities, the largest employers in our area, have had their rate support grant slashed by the Government. When the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the chairman of the Tory party, insults the unemployed by telling them to get on their bikes, he forgets that those who get on their bikes are the young men. When they move out of their areas they do not take with them the old people's homes, the parks, the libraries or the community centres. They have to be paid for by those left behind. With the Government slashing rate support grant, that is an extra burden. My local authority has lost millions of pounds in rate support grant.

I want to point out similarities with the 1930s. When the Jarrow march took place in 1936, when seven out of 10 men were out of work, a charity fund was set up by Sir John Jarvis, the High Sheriff of Surrey. They used the fund to build a park in Jarrow. To get a month's employment in the park a man had to have been out of work for three years.

Today's similarity to that is the community programme, where someone has to be out of work for 15 months before he can get another job. Shipbuilding Securities Ltd., closed down Jarrow's shipyards and put a 40-year embargo on the building of ships. Tyne Ship Repairers is selling its Middle Dock at South Shields, and one of the conditions of the sale is that no one must repair ships in that dock. That is another of today's similarities to the 1930s.

Jarrow is a proud town with proud people. We are proud of our town and do not suggest in any way that we want charity. All that the people in Jarrow want is the right to work. We do not expect the Government to come along with a magic wand that will cure unemployment overnight. There are some ways in which the Government can help. For example, they could allow the local authority to spend the money it has raised from the sale of council houses. It sold 4,300 council houses last year and there are 7,200 applicants on the waiting list. Last year the council built 25 houses and this year it will build 46. According to my calculations it will take 276 years for the people on the waiting list to be rehoused in new houses—unless the Government allow the council to build houses using the money raised from the sale of houses.

The Government could announce a programme for refurbishment and replacement of power stations. That would help NEI-Reyrolle. A decade ago that company employed 12,000 men. Now it employes under 1,000. Unless we get some sort of power station programme there will be no power industry left in Britain.

The Minister knows a bit about defence because he has just been switched from defence procurement. The Government could bring forward the orders for the type 23 frigates and the AOR 2 and that would help the shipbuilding workers. They could give back to the local authority the £9·5 million of rate support grant that they stole from it. They could let the Manpower Services Commission open new training centres in Jarrow instead of closing them at Killingworth and in other parts of the country.

Unless the Government do something about the scourge of unemployment, I shudder to think what the consequences will be. I warn the Minister and the Government that today's youngsters are not so deeply steeped in democracy that they will accept the solutions of the 1930s to the problems of the 1980s. The sooner the Government get that through their heads the better.

The first opportunity to go to the polls after the Jarrow crusade of 1936 was in 1945, when a Labour Government were swept in with an overwhelming majority. It is to be hoped, after the 1986 march, when we go to the polls next year or the year after, that the people will do the same as in 1945. Walter Runciman, the then President of the Board of Trade, told the Jarrow marchers when they went to see him in the 1930s that they should go back to Jarrow and work out their own salvation. We have done our best because at every local and national election since then we have retained Labour candidates. I hope that the country will take an example from Jarrow and will work out the salvation of Britain by making sure that they return a Labour Government at the next general election.

10.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): I sincerely congratulate the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) on having secured this Adjournment debate. I much appreciate his concern and deep commitment to the problems of the unemployed in Jarrow. From my previous ministerial involvement at the Ministry of Defence I particularly acknowledge his efforts to generate naval orders for the north-east yards.

I fully accept the seriousness of the situation in Jarrow. It is no coincidence that this debate marks the 15th anniversary of the Jarrow march. In 1936, as now, the people of Jarrow marched, they said, to make the Government face up to their duty to Jarrow and to other areas of high unemployment. The hon. Gentleman's well-respected predecessor, Ellen Wilkinson, wrote in 1936 that the Government of the day should not be given a chance to:

"get out of the awkward situation in which events like the Jarrow march and its nationwide publicity have placed them."

I suspect that the hon. Gentleman feels such sentiments are still appropriate today, and I know that unemployed people from Jarrow and elsewhere yesterday presented a petition to the House urging help for unemployment blackspots. However, the hon. Gentleman does not need me to tell him that unemployment is not just a matter for local or even national concern: it is an international problem. Indeed, 16 million people are unemployed today in the EEC. We are constantly searching for ways to help industry and commerce create new jobs, and we are also conscious of the need to help the unemployed of this country.

However, it is an indisputable fact that the number of jobs nationally has been rising; over 1 million new jobs, admittedly many of them part-time, have been created since March 1983. Self-employment rose by 550,000 in the four years to June 1986. A total of 65 per cent. of the United Kingdom population is in work—higher than any of our European partners. The number of employees in the service sector is at a record level and the rate of decline in the number of manufacturing jobs has eased considerably since 1983.

Unfortunately this is of no immediate comfort to those living in the unemployment blackspots. I shall refer later to existing Government aid for these areas, but first I shall concentrate on Jarrow.

I can assure the hon. Member that the Government of today do not regard the plight of Jarrow merely as an "awkward situation". Areas like Jarrow cannot, and will not, be swept under the carpet and forgotten.

Tragically, Jarrow and south Tyneside have a long history of high unemployment, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, while unemployment nationally has been rising for the past 20 years. Tyneside has been the victim of industrial blight throughout this century. Indeed, as the hon. Member will be aware, south Tyneside travel-to-work area has the highest unemployment rate in Great Britain and, like the hon. Gentleman, I regard 26 per cent. unemployment as far too high.

Jarrow, like too much of the north-east, suffers from an all too familiar problem. It has depended on traditional, labour intensive industries—like shipbuilding and heavy engineering—which have found it difficult to adapt to a changing world market. While there have been welcome improvements in recent years, I think that it must be accepted that, historically, poor management, low capital investment and demarcation disputes have taken their toll.

There needs to be a fundamental change from the old industrial pattern to new technologies, but these changes are invariably painful and lengthy processes.

Sadly, there have been a large number of redundancies and closures in the area. But I believe that it is a mistake which does no service to south Tyneside to paint a picture of unrelieved gloom.

Let me now turn to the range of Government initiatives and measures that are available. First, I shall deal with what I would term national schemes. During this year, we have introduced the restart programme, the new workers scheme, and the pilot job training scheme, expanding YTS into a two-year programme, extending the community programme, the enterprise allowance scheme, and the jobclub programme. What we want is to be able to offer all unemployed people, whatever their skills or experience, something which will improve their chances of finding a permanent job.

In all, some 15,000 people in south Tyneside, Sunderland and Gateshead are benefiting from measures administered by my Department. This Government are, in overall terms, spending £3 billion nationally on employment, enterprise and training measures.

The expansion of YTS into a two-year vocational programme is a major step towards ensuring that every young person under 18 is either receiving high-quality training, or is in work or full-time education.

[Mr. John Lee]

Nearly 7,000 young people in the south Tyne area are currently on YTS schemes and I believe that participation in YTS extends young people's perceptions of the opportunities open to them. It is a first step towards breaking the belief that there is no life outside the traditional industries.

Help for young people who have either exhausted their YTS entitlement or are too old for YTS is available through the new workers scheme which we introduced earlier this year. This scheme aims to assist jobseekers under 21 by providing financial assistance to employers who engage young people at rates of pay which reflect their relative inexperience. Another group which suffers disproportionately is the long-term unemployed.

The community programme — one of our major schemes to help the long-term unemployed—is currently providing temporary work on projects of benefit to local communities to over 7,000 people in the south Tyne area.

The restart programme, introduced earlier this year, offers a wide range of ways back into work to those who have been unemployed for a year or more. To date, nearly 3,000 people in Jarrow and South Shields have received in-depth counselling interviews from jobcentre staff.

One of the several options which the programme offers is a one or two-week restart course. About 600 people have been put forward for these courses, which help people assess their abilities and improve their job-hunting techniques.

Last month we announced the testing of a new restart programme for the six-month unemployed. Pilots will show whether we should extend restart nationally. Another initiative, which we extended nationally earlier this year, are job clubs to help long-term unemployed people help themselves in their search for work. Early results from job clubs are highly encouraging—two out of three people leaving them go into jobs—and we aim to provide 1,000 job clubs nationally by March 1987.

I understand that Jarrow job club opened on 6 October, and wish its members every success.

These measures are available throughout the country, but we recognise that some areas have particular problems towards which aid needs to be specifically targeted.

Jarrow, and unemployment blackspots throughout the country, need additional help to overcome their economic problems. South Tyneside is, quite rightly, a development area attracting the highest levels of regional aid. Since May 1979 the area has received some £50 million in regional selective assistance and regional development grants. This money has helped create some 1,600 new jobs and safeguard 11,000 existing ones.

However we ourselves cannot create the jobs that Jarrow and south Tyneside need, but through regional aid, we can, and do, help those areas attract the investment which can create new jobs.

Another problem which needs similarly-directed assistance is that of urban deterioration. Our Inner-city policy addresses itself to solving that problem by directing resources towards inner city areas suffering from a poor environment and a high degree of social need.

Through our urban programme we have allocated nearly £4 million this year to south Tyneside borough. This money will be spent on projects of social, environmental and economic value to the community, and more resources are available under the urban housing renewal unit's community refurbishment schemes and the urban development grant scheme.

South Tyneside also benefits from measures which offer advice and aid to shipbuilding workers facing redundancy in order to help them obtain new jobs, retrain or start their own businesses. We have given the Manpower Services Commission £1 million to retrain redundant British Shipbuilders' workers, and have allocated £5 million to set up British Shipbuilders (Enterprise) Ltd.

The Secretary of State for the Environment announced in October a new urban development corporation to be set up in Tyne and Wear. This urban development corporation will be able to spend over £100 million on Derelict land reclamation and the provision of infrastructure which will open up sites for private sector industry and housing development, It will complement the activities of the northern development company, English Industrial Estates, and Government Departments in the area.

We must not forget that, despite the difficult times, contracts are being won and new jobs are being created in Jarrow. For example, Tyne Shiprepair of Wallsend has won a contract worth nearly £750,000 for vessel refurbishment from the Ministry of Defence, and Interconnection Systems is creating 150 jobs in South Shields to manufacture printed circuit boards. We should not forget that Nissan UK—while not within the south Tyneside travel to work area—is creating 2,200 new jobs over the next few years which will be accessible to Jarrow residents.

Indeed, nearly 2,000 people have been placed in work by the public employment service alone since April, and many more will have found jobs by other means.

So far, I have concentrated on measures to help the unemployed become employees. But there is another side to the coin. Earlier, I briefly mentioned the increase in self employment. Sixty per cent. more people were self employed in the north east in 1985 than in 1969. New business registrations were running at some 6,500 in 1985 compared with 5,800 in 1980. This is a start but the north east is none the less relatively deficient in terms of an active independent small firms sector.

We are convinced that a strong small firms sector is essential to our economy. We need small firms to develop all over the country as the innovators, employers, suppliers and wealth creators of the future. We have done a great deal to encourage the growth of small firms by reducing the burden of form filling and simplifying planning procedures. We have allocated £2¼ million for 1986-87 in support of local enterprise agencies such as the Tyneside Enterprise Development Company, and we have extended the loan guarantee scheme. We are also helping unemployed people who wish to set up their own business through the enterprise allowance scheme which has helped nearly 2,500 people in south Tyneside since August 1983. From 3 November, new enterprise allowance scheme businesses no longer need to be wholly independent in order to qualify for assistance, this means that people can start businesses under franchise operations.

I know that the people of south Tyneside are aware of the need to enhance local employment opportunities, and that the south Tyneside economic development committee is currently formulating policies to create new jobs and enhance the area's economy.

I hope that south Tyneside and Jarrow will not forget the potential of the service sector as a source of new jobs and increased wealth.

While I am not trying to say that manufacturing is unimportant, we are experiencing a marked, and probably irreversible, shift from manufacturing-based to a service-based economy. There are now five jobs in services for every two in manufacturing, and a substantial number of the new jobs created over the past two years have been in the service sector. Perhaps the Gateshead Metro Centre, likely to create up to 5,000 jobs, is a pointer to the future. An important part of the service sector is, of course, tourism, while Jarrow, with respect, may not appear the most obvious tourist centre, the area none the less has much to offer the historically-minded tourist as well as the avid reader of Mrs. Catherine Cookson.

I have tried to demonstrate that there are encouraging signs in Jarrow's economy, and we can, and do, help hard-hit areas to overcome their economic problems. The local authority and people of Jarrow are making laudable efforts to help themselves, and we have been supporting these efforts in the ways I have described. While unemployment is still a deep and depressing problem, we are rightly providing more benefits for the unemployed of today than were available to their 1930s counterparts. The unemployed of the thirties might have received benefit and assistance benefits, but not all would have been eligible for either, now an unemployed person may receive unemployment benefit, housing benefit and—if he has children—child benefit, free school meals and free milk, thanks to our welfare state. I do not want in any way to minimise the hardships of life on the dole today, but at least conditions are demonstrably better than when Jarrow marched 50 years ago.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that we are doing a significant amount to help both the regeneration of economic activity in his constituency, and his unemployed constituents. Though, I am sure that he thinks it is nowhere near enough. I urge him, however, to remember that the public purse is not bottomless. Throwing money at problems like Jarrow's is not the answer. Unrestrained spending achieves two things—short-term jobs——

Mr. Dixon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lee: I ask the hon. Gentleman to excuse me for not giving way. I must get on.

Mr. Dixon: It is costing £15 million to keep them on the dole.

Mr. Lee: Unrestrained spending achieves two things — short-term jobs which soon disappear, and an undermined economy, which takes a long time to recover. I know that the people of Jarrow cannot put everything right themselves, but nor can the Government. We all have to work together in a difficult situation.

We believe that the Government's role is to establish the economic conditions most conducive to job creation, we have the best job creation record in Europe, but we must generate even more jobs if we are to beat unemployment in Jarrow and elsewhere. We have after too many years, a stable economy with the lowest inflation rates for 20 years. Like the hon. Gentleman I would rather see faster results, but we must not sacrifice long-term stability for speedy, ephemeral returns.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 6 November 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxpayers (Statistics)

1. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been taken out of taxation since May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): Some 1·4 million people would still be paying tax today had we simply increased the 1978-79 tax allowances in line with inflation; they now pay no income tax at all.

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate the Government on this excellent fact. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government aim to take more people out of taxation? Should this not be contrasted with the numbers who would be taken into taxation if public expenditure were increased by £28 billion, forcing the standard rate of income tax up to 53p in the pound, which is what the Labour party proposes if ever it wins power again?

Mr. Brooke: It would be wrong for me to anticipate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, but it would be in the spirit of what he has achieved so far if more people were taken out of income tax. As to the increase in public expenditure of £28 billion, it has been said by the Labour party that it would only tax the top 5 per cent. It has also been said, out of Sheffield, that to say that Labour would tax only the top 5 per cent. would be dishonest.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is it not the case that since the Government came into office in 1979 the total tax burden hs increased from 38 per cent. of GNP to 44 per cent. now, and that a recent report of the OECD showed that our tax burden is now heavier than that of most industrial countries in the West?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that taxation as a percentage of GNP has increased, but that is why the Government intend to reduce it.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: In this debate, should we not also consider the impact of personal allowances? Am I not right in saying that while our personal allowances are similar to those of our major competitors, our basic rate of tax is higher?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is correct. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has shown a balance between real increases in allowances with cuts in the basic rate of income tax.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Does the Minister accept that in evidence it is necessary to tell not only the truth but the whole truth, and while we may take some satisfaction in the numbers that are being taken out of income tax, that cannot be dealt with in isolation? Which Government put a standard rate of 15 per cent. VAT on the vast majority of goods and services?

Mr. Brooke: It is true that, in line with the policy of moving the burden of taxation from direct to indirect, the previous Conservative Administration discharged that task.

Take-home Pay

2. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the increase in take-home pay since 1979 of a married man with two children on the average industrial wage; and how it compares with the national increase in productivity over the same period.

Mr. Brooke: The real take-home pay of a married man who has two children and is on average earnings is expected to increase by 17 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1986-87. Since this Government took office productivity has increased by 13·4 per cent.

Dr. Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures show that, during the Conservative Government's period in office, there has been a substantial increase in the standard of living of people in this country? Does he also agree that unless we modify our pay demands, or increase our productivity, our international competitiveness is at risk?

Mr. Brooke: I agree with the first part my hon. Friend's question. As to the second part, what is already an outstandingly healthy economy would be healthier still if the rise in real earnings were matched by a rise in productivity, impressive though the latter is.

Mr. Terry Fields: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in parts of Liverpool 80 per cent. of children attending school receive free school meals, which is indicative of low pay in that area? On average, 50 per cent. of school children in my constituency of Broadgreen receive free school meals. Is it not a ludicrous and idiotic suggestion by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that people in places such as Liverpool should take more modest settlements in their income? Is that not an absolute recipe for disaster for an already impoverished region? When will the Government do something positive about providing real jobs and a decent standard of living for people in Liverpool?

Mr. Brooke: Under present circumstances, if we could achieve a 1 per cent. reduction in the rate of growth of real pay, that would, over time, create 110,000 to 220,000 new jobs. Those figures can be increased pari passu. That would make a powerful contribution to our unemployment problems.

Tax Yield

3. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total tax yield from those earning more than £25,000 per annum in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* 1985-86.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): Taxpayers with incomes of more than £25,000 paid £8·7 billion in income tax in 1985-86, which was 22·8 per cent. of the total. These taxpayers represent

just under 4 per cent. of all income tax payers. The same top percentage of taxpayers in 1978-79 paid £7·8 billion in income tax at 1985-86 prices, which was 20·6 per cent. of the total.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that that destroys the credibility of Labour's plans for raising extra revenue? Does he accept that the result of a Labour Government would be a renewed flight of talent from this country and high tax on the low earner?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is quite right. The figures I gave show that the yields have increased, with lower taxes on the higher paid. They show what we have always said, that getting taxes down from the penal rate levels under the last Government motivates the wealth creators, to the benefit of the whole country, and increases yields. Labour's policy of a return to the rates of tax that existed in 1979 would, as my hon. Frind said, drive many of our most able, energetic and ambitious people out of the country.

Mr. Ashton: Are not the statistics in this planted question so obviously fiddled? Surely, if an extra 3 million people are taken out of taxation by being put on the dole, it affects the bottom of the pyramid and makes it look better at the top.

Mr. MacGregor: I was talking about a percentage of the total tax. I should like to make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that the figures are not fiddled. They are accurate figures and they demonstrate that a higher proportion of the taxes currently obtained—it is not a question of people at the bottom end coming out—comes from those with higher earnings, because of the motivations we have introduced.

Mr. Nicholls: As increasing tax rates on the rich actually produces less revenue and not more, does that not mean that if Labour were to impose such tax bands the £24 billion that it has to raise for its social spending would have to be raised entirely from those paying the standard rate income tax?

Mr. MacGregor: It is true that under a Labour Government—if ever there was one again—tax would rise on all income groups. My hon. Friend does not need to go as far as that. Labour's plan to raise £3·6 billion from the top 5 per cent. would mean tax rates of 70 per cent. for all those—including married couples with both partners earning—with earnings above £24,000. That is clearly a crippling increase in the tax burden on those groups. I believe that it would reduce yields, but it would have much more serious effects on the economy as a whole.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend agree that priority should now be given to reducing further the standard rate of tax, which is the marginal rate for most taxpayers? As cuts in the top rates of tax have increased revenue, is it not possible that there would be a similar effect if the standard rate were cut?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that my hon. Friend noted that in his Budget this year my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer deliberately skewed the tax reductions—this was with emphasis on the basic rate—in favour of those with average to lower incomes. It is precisely that group, which we believe is still taxed too highly, which will gain most from the Chancellor's long-term pledge on income tax.

Mr. Gould: Is my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) not right when he says that the figures produced by the Chief Secretary are suspect because the percentages that he quotes are those of a much narrower tax base, a base which has been made narrower by the unemployment which the Government's economic policies have produced?

Mr. MacGregor: The absolute amount of tax increased from this group for the two years at 1985-86 prices, and not proportionately. That is why lower taxes, which motivate people, have in this instance produced a higher yield.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: If the Government believe in lower taxes, why in the long period of seven years that they have been in office have they increased taxes for the average taxpayer by 3p in the pound?

Mr. MacGregor: If income tax had remained at the same rates and allowances as in 1978-79, an additional £8 billion would have come through from income tax in this period. That is a sign of how we have been following our policy of reducing direct taxes.

Wider Share Ownership

4. **Mr. Forman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on Government policy towards the fiscal encouragement of wider share ownership.

Mr. Brooke: Over the past seven years the Government have significantly improved and extended the tax reliefs available for participation in company share schemes. The number of all-employee share schemes has increased considerably, from 30 in 1979 to over 1,150 today.

Mr. Forman: Is my hon. Friend aware that these figures are very welcome, but that the time has come when the Government need to go further in this direction? Does he accept the powerful case that is being advanced by people in all parties, I believe, that employee share schemes that are available to all employees should have some measure of time-limited tax relief? Will he draw this important point to the attention of our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he is considering his next Budget?

Mr. Brooke: I welcome my hon. Friend's remarks. Further relief will be kept under review in the manner in which it steadily has been over the past seven years. A great deal has already been achieved, but I shall draw my hon. Friend's words to the attention of our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Will my hon. Friend accept from those of us who do not have any family silver how pleased we are with the performance of our Jaguar, Telecom, TSB, Cable and Wireless, British Aerospace and other shares?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment. He may be interested to know that of the companies which have been privatised, 350,000 employees, or 80 per cent. of the employees therein, have become shareholders.

Married Man's Allowance

5. **Mr. Barron** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received on the Government's proposals to abolish the married man's allowance.

Mr. MacGregor: We have received a considerable number of representations on the Green Paper. The great majority of those expressing a preference support the proposal to introduce transferable allowances; which is what the Government are recommending and is not the same thing as abolishing the married man's allowance.

Mr. Barron: If the estimated cost of the proposals in the Green Paper will not be a cost to the Exchequer, are they not likely to impose a further tax burden on over 6 million tax payers, bearing in mind that if the cost were to fall on the Exchequer it would be as high as £5·4 billion? Why does the Minister not open to discussion the cost of this proposed scheme, when at the end of the day it will not do justice to the married woman's allowance anyway?

Mr. MacGregor: It is intended that the scheme will be introduced over a period, and much depends on what happens to thresholds and allowances during that period. I believe, as is clear from the responses to the proposals in the Green Paper, that there are so many benefits in moving to transferable allowances that it is a tax reform that the vast majority of taxpayers would support.

Mr. Marlow: Why does my right hon. Friend not take action to take the money from the married man's allowance and use it to encourage mothers to stay at home and look after their children? Will he, with one move, open up jobs in the labour market for men who cannot find work and at the same time encourage a lot of mothers to do that which they do best — stay at home and look after their children?

Mr. MacGregor: The proposal will give choice to married couples. It will give benefits to wives who are having their first children, who perhaps have worked before and who stay at home to look after their children. They will be able to transfer the allowance to their husbands. The proposal we recommend helps couples at the stage in their lives at which suddenly one partner becomes financially dependent on the other. The crucial factor is that it gives them a choice.

European Monetary System

6. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with the President of the Bundesbank concerning sterling's relationship with the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I have discussed the European monetary system with the president of the Bundesbank on a number of occasions.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer accept that if his import-inducing consumer boom continues to rip sterling may again come under pressure? In that eventuality, would it not be better for the Chancellor to cover himself within the exchange rate mechanism than to rely on the uncertain bounty of the Bundesbank?

Mr. Lawson: There is much to be said for fully joining the European monetary system. One of the reasons for joining the system is not the soft option which the hon. Gentleman implied. It would not be a soft option.

Mr. Dykes: If France and Germany are in the EMS as larger and stronger economies, why cannot we join it?

Mr. Lawson: France and Germany do many things which we do not necessarily do, as much as I respect the Republic of France and the Federal Republic of Germany. My hon. Friend's support for our membership of the European exchange rate mechanism is well-known and consistent. We keep this matter regularly under review. The balance of argument has shifted considerably, but the Government have not yet decided that the time is right.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: As everybody knows of the differences of opinion between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister about joining the monetary exchange rate mechanism, will the Chancellor accept that in this instance, perhaps uniquely, the Prime Minister may be right, and that if we were to join, despite the obvious advantages of a fixed currency, we would be closely tied to the German deutschmark, with the problems that that would entail?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is extremely percipient in noting that if we were to join the EMS fully sterling would be linked to the deutschmark.

Mr. Maples: When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor next discusses the EMS with the president of the Bundesbank, will he discuss whether there might be some connection between the fact that bank lending in Germany is growing at only about 5 per cent. a year and their interest rates are under 5 per cent., whereas here bank lending is growing at about 16 per cent. and our interest rates are 11 per cent.?

Mr. Lawson: There are many reasons why German interest rates are lower than those in this country. One is that inflation is even lower in Germany — indeed, at present it is negative — than in this country. Another reason, and it is one to which I have alluded on a number of occasions because it is important, is that the markets can see that unit labour costs in this country are rising a good deal faster than in Germany and most of our major competitors.

Dr. McDonald: Will the Chancellor confirm that the figures published on Tuesday show that the fall of $668 million of gold and currency reserves was spent to hold off the rise in interest rates and thus save the Chancellor's face during the Tory party conference? If so, that is a shocking waste of the country's reserves.

Mr. Lawson: It is difficult to satisfy the Opposition. They complain when interest rates are high. However, when reserves are used tactically at a particular time to ensure that a rise in interest rates can be held to 1 per cent. and not 2 per cent., they complain about that.

Building Societies Association

7. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Building Societies Association; and what topics were discussed.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): My right hon. Friend has not met the Building

Societies Association this year. I have myself met the BSA three times, mainly to discuss aspects of the recent building societies legislation.

Mr. McCrindle: Will my hon. Friend tell the building societies, and more particularly their customers, that the Government have no intention of restricting mortgage tax relief either to first-time buyers, as has been suggested in some quarters, or to those who are paying the standard rate of tax alone? Would that not create a log jam at both the top and the bottom of the housing market, which would do no one any good?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to this point. He will have noted the answer that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave last week. The building societies and all those with mortgages — 8 million of our fellow citizens — should beware that the Labour party, through the Leader of the Opposition, has now made it clear that under a Labour Government only those who are young, who have many children or who fall on hard times would get the full benefit of mortgage interest relief.

Mr. Freeson: Would it not be appropriate to switch the burden of mortgage tax relief to repair and renewal funds instead of incurring the considerable expenditure indulged in by way of relief on the capital purchase? More specifically, will the Minister discuss as quickly as possible with the Building Societies Association putting an end to the idiotic and unfathomable rule which the Treasury imposes and which as a general proposition prevents the investment of millions of pounds in the provision of rented housing, of which we are in dire need, because it will not allow the marriage between grants and private investment in rented property?

Mr. Stewart: It is extraordinary that an Opposition Member should speak about the problems of rented accommodation when it is the Labour party's policies that have prevented the revival of the rented sector. Mortgage interest tax relief contributes satisfactorily to the growth of owner-occupation. I am glad to be able to say that that figure has now reached 62 per cent., compared with 55 per cent. when the Conservative party came to power.

Mr. Leigh: Has my hon. Friend received any representations on mortgage tax relief from the alliance parties? Before he conveys those views to the Building Societies Association, will he say whether he has decided which alliance spokesman to believe? Is it the leader of the SDP, who appears to believe that tax relief should be abolished altogether, or the experienced and distinguished Treasury spokesman for the Liberal party, who believes that it should be restricted to basic rate taxpayers? Is the alliance as disorganised, as disunited and shambolic on this issue as on any other?

Mr. Stewart: The policies of all the Opposition parties on these matters are in a state of confusion, but the one common theme to each is that they want to cut back on mortgage interest tax relief, to the damage of home ownership.

Dr. McDonald: Will the Minister care to note, as he seems to have failed to understand the words of either my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition or other Front-Bench spokesmen, that the party's policy is to retain mortgage tax relief at the standard rate, not to allow mortgage tax relief at the higher rate, and to give further help to first-time buyers, such as my constituents, who face not only exceptionally high interest rates, which are this Government's responsibility, but high prices for such houses as they might wish to buy? Those three points have been made clear repeatedly both by the leader of the Labour party and by other Labour Front-Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Stewart: I am always interested to note what the hon. Lady says. I note it with particular attention when what she says is so different from what the leader of her party has said.

I remind the House that, only a few days ago, the Leader of the Opposition said that he was advocating arrangements which would mean that

"young people, people with maximum family responsibilities to children or dependent relatives, and people who experience inadvertant falls in income, derive maximum benefit".

The only way that such people can derive maximum benefit, unless extra resources are devoted to mortgage tax relief, is for all others to suffer. The other 8 million had better watch out.

Inflation

8. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

Mr. Lawson: The retail prices index increased by 3 per cent. in the 12 months to September.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the impressively low level of inflation enjoyed in this country today could be put in jeopardy if we continue to have high wage increases which bear no relation to productivity?

Mr. Lawson: We do have a problem with wage increases running far in excess of productivity. That is perfectly true. I believe that this is basically a threat to jobs and that is why I am concerned about it. It is not a threat to inflation which can be kept under control by our monetary policy.

Mr. Penhaligon: Does the Chancellor agree that the current level of inflation cannot sustain the personal credit explosion which is currently taking place at a level of 140 per cent. over the past 12 months? Does that mean that the Chancellor is to allow inflation to increase? Will he take measures to control credit? Or is he just hoping that it will all hang together for another 12 months?

Mr. Lawson: I am perfectly happy to rest on this Government's record on inflation. We have brought inflation down from the peak of 27 per cent. that occurred when the Labour Government were in power, supported by the Liberal party, to the present level of 3 per cent., which is one of the lowest levels it has been for the past 20 years. The policies that brought inflation down will continue to remain in place and ensure that it remains low.

Mr. Dickens: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, because of the firm grip that the Government have kept on inflation, the risk-takers, entrepreneurs and job creators who went abroad are returning to Britain? Those people were driven abroad by the high taxation and high inflation of a Socialist Government. I hope that the voters of Knowsley, North remember that.

Mr. Lawson: As usual, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. I would add that a further important change has

arisen as a result of the new tax climate and the sharp reduction in inflation. We now have more new business formation than ever before. Every week 500 new businesses net are set up. That is one of the most important seeds for the future which can give us encouragement and which we have sought for a long time.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Chancellor aware that his known assessment of the underlying rate of inflation is based on an underestimate of sterling depreciation which, under the law of one price, affects not only imports but works through to all goods and pay, and eventually even to the non-trade sector?

Mr. Lawson: The answer that I gave concerned the retail prices index for September as calculated by rules which have been accepted by parties on both sides of the House. Despite its defects—and it may have some—it is the best and generally acknowledged measure of inflation that we have. If the hon. Gentleman is thinking of future inflation, I shall have something to say about that later today.

Mr. Dorrell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the speech that was recently delivered in Loughborough by the Governor of the Bank of England on the role of monetary policy and the control of inflation strengthens the argument for Britain joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system? As we downgrade the importance of monetary aggregates in the control of inflation, are we not by implication increasing the importance of stabilising the external value of the pound?

Mr. Lawson: I am sure that my hon. Friend was especially pleased that the Governor of the Bank of England gave his important lecture on monetary policy in his constituency. It is a lecture that will repay reading by the whole House. As for my hon. Friend's question about the exchange rate, of course it is important, and it would be highly undesirable to see a continuing depreciation of the exchange rate, which would inevitably cause faster inflation. That I am determined to avoid.

Mr. Heffer: The people of Knowsley, North now have to pay more for their bus fares as a result of the deregulation of the buses. Is that an increase in inflation, or not?

Mr. Lawson: The rate of inflation of 3 per cent. is less than half the lowest figure that it ever reached in any month under the Government whom the hon. Member supported.

Mr. Latham: Will my right hon. Friend repeat what he said in his Budget statement—that there is a good case for petrol prices to come down again? They seem to go up a lot quicker than they come down.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend , who is an acute observer of petrol price movements, may well be right. I am glad to say that petrol prices have indeed come down since the Budget, just as I predicted that they should and would. I recall that the Opposition said that nothing of the sort would happen. I was right and the Opposition, as usual, were wrong. Petrol prices are lower than at the time of the Budget.

Mr. Gould: As the Chancellor presumably authorised the Governor of the Bank of England to announce the abandonment of sterling M3 as a monetary target, are we to assume that the whole disastrous monetarist experiment of the past seven years has been nothing more than a mistake? Has the Chancellor yet made up his mind—if so, perhaps he could let us into the secret—about what new mistake he intends to use to replace the old one?

Mr. Lawson: May I take this first opportunity to congratulate the hon. Gentleman, not merely on his election to the Labour party shadow Cabinet, but on his membership of the Opposition Treasury team? I read in one of the newspapers that his promotion to that job would add much-needed talent to a lack lustre Opposition team. I should like, on behalf of the Government, to associate myself with those remarks.

As to the hon. Gentleman's question, it is clear that, in the short time that he has been in his important job, he has not had time to read the Governor's lecture fully. I am sure that he will do so. As for the monetarist experiment to which he referred, I would observe that the proof of the pudding is in the eating and that it has brought inflation down to the lowest level for 20 years.

Season Tickets (Tax Relief)

9. **Mr. Amess** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to provide tax relief at the basic rate on season tickets.

Mr. Brooke: No, Sir.

Mr. Amess: Although I am fully aware of the enormous pressure that the Treasury is under to give such assistance, does my hon. Friend appreciate the attractiveness of such a proposal for the hard-pressed commuter who faces increasing transport costs? Does my hon. Friend agree that if he undertook such a proposal it might lead to a reduction in the amount of traffic on our roads?

Mr. Brooke: As 2¼ per cent. of the entire country's work force commutes to my constituency daily, I am familiar with the problem, but the expense of home-to-work travel has never been allowable for tax relief. Where people live has been regarded as a personal decision, so travel has been regarded as a personal expense.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister agree that the proposal is eminently reasonable, socially desirable and would bring some much-needed equalisation into the Exchequer's treatment of various forms of motor transport—three reasons for probable disqualification in the eyes of the Chancellor?

Mr. Brooke: I answered the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) with the words, "No, Sir." and I give the hon. Gentleman the same answer.

Charitable Gifts

10. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about his Budget proposals to encourage charitable gifts.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Budget proposals to encourage charitable giving were warmly welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House and by charities themselves. They represent the most substantial package of tax concessions for charities and charitable giving ever introduced in a single Budget.

Mrs. Bottomley: Can my hon. Friend confirm that charitable giving has more than doubled since the

Government came to power? What expectations has he for further realising our people's sense of responsibility and generosity?

Mr. Stewart: The contributions to charity through covenants, bequests and other means have risen dramatically since the Government took office. However, I still suggest that the payroll giving scheme and the measures introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget earlier this year will be regarded as some of the most important encouragements to charitable giving that have ever been introduced and I hope that they will be fully exploited. I also hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will encourage charities and employers in their own constituencies to take part in the new scheme.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In respect of the Government's welcome initiative on payroll schemes for charitable giving, does my hon. Friend agree that the timetable between the end of the consultation period and the inception of the scheme next April will be very tight? Therefore, will he announce his definitive regulations as early as possible? Is he also able to say that the Government's own employees will be able to participate in such schemes?

Mr. Stewart: I note my hon. Friend's point about the need to have the regulations in place. The scheme is necessarily somewhat complicated. However, we published draft regulations last week. We hope that representations on those will be forthcoming as soon as possible, certainly during this month. We would then naturally want to publish the regulations in definitive form as early as we can. We want to give charities, employers and employees the longest possible notice to implement the scheme. Those who will want to take part will need to have the formal regulations available before they make their decisions.

Unemployment Levels

13. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to include a forecast of the levels of unemployment in his next Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: No. It has not been the practice of this or previous Governments to publish forecasts of unemployment.

Mr. Nellist: Is not the real reason for that answer the fact that, despite the 18 statistical fiddles that the Government have used to count the number of unemployed in the past seven years, the only hope that the Government see for bringing the unemployment figures below 3 million by the time of the general election is through further statistical fiddles? The Government's own figure shows that there are 7,154 unemployed in Coventry, South-East, costing £46 million a year in benefits and costing those in work £35 a week. Is not the only hope for the unemployed in Coventry, South-East, not more statistical fiddles, but a change of Government?

Mr. MacGregor: Not at all. I must make it clear that we are simply following previous practice. There is no question of any change in the publication of forecasts of unemployment. The hon. Gentleman never understands that it is customers for goods and services at home and overseas who create jobs. They are hugely put off by the sort of activities which the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues previously undertook and encouraged in British industry, which did so much to destroy jobs. It is the reverse of that which is the greatest hope.

Mr. Churchill: Although the levels of unemployment remain unacceptably high, is it not noteworthy that this country has a higher proportion of its population of working age in employment than any other major country in western Europe? Will my right hon. Friend take steps to make that fact more widely known?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right and I am extremely grateful to him for giving me another opportunity to make that fact known. There is only one other country which has a higher proportion. What is more, in this country our level of youth unemployment is below the EEC average, and falling. It is also true that we have had an employment increase. It is important to emphasise, as my hon. Friend did, employment rather than simply unemployment. It is true that we have had an employment increase in the past 13 quarters, which is the longest period of continuous employment growth for almost 30 years. Those are the facts and my hon. Friend is entirely right in emphasis.

Mr. Terry Davis: Will the Chief Secretary admit that the reason why the Government will not publish the forecast is not that the forecast does not exist but that if they did publish it it would confirm what everybody knows, which is that the Government have no hope to give the people who have no jobs?

Mr. MacGregor: That is simply not true. We are following the practice of previous Governments, none of whom have produced long-term forecasts on unemployment.

Asset Sales

14. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the proceeds from asset sales for 1986-87.

Mr. MacGregor: Privatisation proceeds in 1986-87 are expected to be about £4¼ billion, as indicated in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Lamond: As the gas industry in this country already has the widest possible ownership, that is, every citizen of the land, what is the point of continuing with a £20 million advertising campaign — all at the cost of consumers of gas? That is enough money to provide every retirement pensioner in this country with a week's free gas to see them over the winter.

Mr. MacGregor: What the Government have been embarking on in their privatisation programme is not only of great benefit to industry and the economy, but provides true public ownership by the wider extension of shares.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November 1986.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had

meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Hughes: Has the Prime Minister had time today to reflect on the seven and a half years of her premiership, and especially on the statement made during the 1979 election that her Government's first task would be to create jobs for our economy? In 1983 the Government said that their greatest task was to create a prosperous economy providing jobs for our people. Can she therefore explain how, in this capital city, unemployment has increased from 2·9 per cent. to 9·4 per cent., with 400,000 people now out of work in London alone? Is there not one answer to that—cruel failure?

The Prime Minister: Since 1983, 1 million net new jobs have been created, which has brought hope to 1 million more people. The hon. Gentleman asked why that has not had a greater effect on the unemployment register. There are three reasons for that: first, unit wage costs are still rising faster than elsewhere; secondly, the continued increase in the population of working age due to the baby boom of the 1960s; and, thirdly, continued reduction in overmanning in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Waller: At this time, when we remember the sacrifices made by our service people in two world wars, will my right hon. Friend look into the actions of those local authorities which, amazingly, have specifically banned those in receipt of service and police pensions from seeking employment with them? Is she aware that the Labour-controlled Bradford council has specifically excluded service pensioners from seeking a job with it? Is that not a slap in the face for all those who have served their country with distinction?

The Prime Minister: I saw that report and I hope that all local education authorities will use the very good teachers who are available and who have served in the forces, especially for subjects such as mathematics and physics. I urge all local authorities to exploit any potential source of good quality teachers. They will find those teachers among people who have served in the armed forces.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall telling me on Tuesday that it was for the governors of the BBC to reply to the attacks made by her right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster? Now that those governors have convincingly rebutted 39 out of the 40 charges made by her right hon. Friend, does she agree with the governors or with her right hon. Friend?

The Prime Minister: It is for the governors to answer the complaints. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that freedom of speech involves the freedom to make complaints — a freedom which he uses every Tuesday and Thursday.

Mr. Kinnock: The BBC has made no attempt to make an incursion into the freedom of speech of any member of the Government. The reverse is certainly not the case. That effort at coercion is so blatant and obvious. Is the Prime Minister accepting the claims of her right hon. Friend, or is she rejecting them? Is she on his side or on the side of the independence of the BBC?

The Prime Minister: The BBC exists because of a charter, a licence and an agreement. That is not embodied in statute at all. Therefore, the governors have a special duty to see that that charter, that licence and that agreement are upheld. People are free to make complaints, and they do. It is up to the governors to answer them. In this instance, the governors have made a reply. It is not for me to judge between them.

Mr. Kinnock: The country will conclude that the governors of the BBC have discharged their duty to freedom, which is more than can be said for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Bearing in mind that it was the right hon. Gentleman's Labour authorities that tried to restrict the circulation of free newspapers, he is hardly in a position, when he supports that censorship, to make complaints himself.

Mr. Speed: Will my right hon. Friend find time in between her official engagements today to congratulate Mrs. Jo Hawkes, who was the alliance parliamentary candidate in Ashford at the last election, who today joined the Conservative party?

The Prime Minister: I gladly do so. She is welcome, and I wish her well in her future career.

Mr. James Callaghan: In view of the Prime Minister's difficulties in answering questions from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, may I ask how much longer she intends to allow the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to go on making a fool of the Government?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) joins his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition in making effective use of freedom of speech, which is freedom also to make complaints. I hope that he is not himself trying to stem that freedom by making any suggestion that the BBC has anything other than a duty to uphold the terms of the charter, the licence and the agreement.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way for the BBC to allay suspicions of bias and distortion is not for it to sit as judge and jury in such matters, but for it to be answerable, as other television companies might be made answerable, to an independent broadcasting council, to which aggrieved parties could make representations?

The Prime Minister: The difference between the BBC and other television companies, and some of the independent broadcasting companies, is that the other companies are bound by statute passed by the House. The BBC is not bound in any way, which is why complaints have to be made to the governors. I understand that it would be very difficult to take that charter or licence or agreement to court, which imposes on the governors special duties and responsibilities.

Q2. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Loyden: Will the Prime Minister now accept that the questionnaire from the Department of Employment to the unemployed is unnecessary and, indeed, is seen by many in the informed sections of the benefit system as a vicious attack on the unemployed? Will the right hon.

Lady now advise the Secretary of State to withdraw this obnoxious document, so that those who have a right to benefit can claim it?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. As I said to the House when the same question came up last week, the test of availability for work was confirmed by the Labour Government in the Social Security Act 1975. The hon. Gentleman now therefore wishes to disregard that Act, which was brought in by his own Labour Government.

Q3. **Mr. Stern** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stern: In the course of her busy day, will my right hon. Friend find time to consider an inquiry into the use by education authorities of section 11 money, which is provided for the teaching of English to members of ethnic communities, in view of the apparent use of that money by authorities such as Brent, and possibly Avon, for the promotion of black racism?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that two cases have been reported, and the Home Secretary has asked Brent for further information about the use to which it is now proposing to put section 11 grants. He has made it clear that no grant will be paid unless he is satisfied by the reply. The Avon multicultural education centre is also the subject of inquiry by the Home Office, with particular reference to the eligibility for section 11 grant of certain posts there.

Mr. Steel: In the wake of the controversy between the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the BBC, will the Prime Minister undertake to clarify to all her colleagues the distinction between public interest and party interest? Is she aware, for example, that another of her hon. Friends has been writing to business men in his constituency offering direct access to Government Ministers at a fee of £35 payable to his Conservative association, and, further, claiming it, outrageously, to be a legitimate business expense? Will the Prime Minister recognise that there is a need to draw a clear distinction between the interests of good government and the interests of her party?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman has any complaints to make, I am sure that he will make them to the proper authorities. With regard to Government and party, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, I am responsible for answering from the Dispatch Box for Government. He equally knows that I am not responsible for answering for party. Although I have done so on the BBC matter, it is not strictly within my course of duty from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Conway: Bearing in mind my right hon. Friend's responsibility as First Lord of the Treasury for financing the armed forces, may I ask whether she has had time to read this week's survey showing that the majority of young people in Britain would welcome an opportunity to participate in a form of national service? In view of the highly successful expansion of the Territorial Army, will my right hon. Friend introduce a Royal Commission to examine how the young people of Great Britain can serve their country?

The Prime Minister: I saw that report, but our armed forces are based on the existence of voluntary professional armed forces and we do not have any plans at the moment to change that. There are a number of youth training places which can be served in the armed forces and those, I think, are earnestly sought after. I said that at the moment we have no plans to change that. It would, of course, be extremely expensive to alter the whole nature of our armed forces, which I do not wish to do.

Q5. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Foulkes: Can the Prime Minister explain what circumstances have changed since June to justify our ambassador at the United Nations attacking the Nicaraguans for using the judgment of the world court, which the Foreign Office welcomed when it was promulgated in June? Is this the too-high price that we have to pay for American support over Syria?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense in the latter part of his question. Although we had no legal objection to the resolution, we were not prepared to support the attempt by Nicaragua to exploit a legal judgment for its own—[*Interruption.*]—political ends. The Government in Nicaragua are increasingly repressive in their methods and in recent months have taken action—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is entitled to a hearing.

The Prime Minister: In recent months the Government of Nicaragua have taken action to close the Church radio station and newspaper. They also continue to intervene to promote subversion outside their borders, thus threatening the stability of the region.

Mr. Holt: Reverting to the BBC, does my right hon. Friend recall, before the current episode blew up with the BBC, the Ian Curteis play? Is she aware that it was specifically banned from being broadcast, on the direct instructions of the director-general, because it showed the Government and my right hon. Friend in a good light?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that if my hon. Friend has that complaint he can make it to the appropriate authorities.

Q6. **Mr. Snape** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Snape: Will the Prime Minister speak to her right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) today and ask him to moderate his intemperate attacks on the BBC? Is she aware that her hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) makes almost nightly appearances on the media? Will the Prime Minister ask her hon. Friend to do two things; first, ensure that a red warning triangle is exhibited, and secondly, curb her appearances before I start believing that the BBC is biased against the Conservative party?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman and so many other Opposition Members have so few complaints about the economy that they can concentrate on the sort of trivia that has been raised during this Question Time.

Autumn Statement

3.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

Cabinet today agreed the Government's public expenditure plans for the next three years. In the normal course of events that would be followed by the publication of the printed autumn statement, accompanied by an oral statement to the House, next Tuesday. For obvious reasons, that is not possible this year. So while the autumn statement will be printed in the normal way and presented to Parliament as soon as the House reassembles next Wednesday, I thought it would be for the convenience of the House if I made my oral statement today. This will cover all three of the key elements in the printed statement: the Government's outline public expenditure plans for each of the next three years and the expected outturn for this year; proposals for next year's national insurance contributions; and the forecast of the economic prospects for 1987 required by the Industry Act 1975.

The full text of the economic forecast, together with the public expenditure figures and the rest of the information customarily published with this statement, will be available from the Vote Office as soon as I have sat down. They will also appear in the printed autumn statement to be published next week.

I turn first to the outturn for the current financial year, 1986-87. The public expenditure planning total now looks likely to amount to almost £140½ billion—£1¼ billion, or a little less than 1 per cent., above what was allowed for in this year's public expenditure White Paper. The main reason for this excess is a 9 per cent. rise in the current spending of local authorities — far more than was provided for.

However, other items on the expenditure side, the largest of which is debt interest, are likely to fall short of what was forecast at the time of the Budget, thus reducing the total overrun on the expenditure side to about £1½ billion.

On the receipts side, the North sea tax take is likely to be even lower, by about £1 billion, than I envisaged at the time of the Budget, largely because for a long period the oil price has been below the $15 a barrel level on which the Budget arithmetic was explicitly based. This shortfall, however, is more than offset by the continuing buoyancy of non-oil tax revenues, in particular VAT and corporation tax. Non-oil revenues now look likely to exceed the Budget forecast by £2 billion. This would imply a net overrun on the receipts side of about £1 billion, rather more than that on the expenditure side. But this will be reduced by a change I propose to make to the North sea fiscal regime.

The collapse of the oil price has led to a sharp cutback in investment activity in the North sea, with inevitable consequences for the United Kingdom offshore supplies industry both in Scotland and the north-east of England. I therefore propose, on a carefully targeted basis, to accelerate the arrangements for the repayment to the oil companies of advance petroleum revenue tax due to them. The details of this change, which will require legislation early in the new Session of Parliament, are set out in a press notice which the Inland Revenue will be issuing as soon as I have sat down.

The new arrangements will have a revenue cost this financial year of some £300 million, which will be fully recouped over the next three years. Taking this into account, the public sector borrowing requirement for the current year is still forecast to be about £7 billion, the figure I set in the Budget.

I turn now to the public expenditure plans for the next three years. Since 1982-83, public spending, both before and after deducting the proceeds of privatisation, has been declining as a proportion of national output. It is set to be lower still this year. The Government are determined to ensure that this trend continues—to see to it that total public spending, even without taking account of privatisation proceeds, continues to decline as a percentage of GDP.

The plans I am about to announce for the next three years secure that objective. Indeed, they show that by the end of the period the ratio of public spending to national output will be back to the level of the early 1970s. But within this overall constraint, and in the context of their policy priorities, the Government have felt it right to allow an increase in the previously announced planning totals for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Compared with the prospective outturn for the current year, we are now planning for an average growth in the public expenditure planning total of about 1¼ per cent. a year in real terms—well within the prospective growth of the economy as a whole. The new planning totals have thus been set at £148½ billion for 1987-88 and £154¼ billion in 1988-89, an increase of £4¾ billion and £5½ billion respectively over the totals previously published. For 1989-90, the planning total has been set at £161¼ billion.

As usual, these totals incorporate estimates for the proceeds of privatisation. Last year I increased the estimate of these proceeds very substantially to £4¾ billion in each of the three survey years, a figure which I expect to be duly achieved this year. Although the privatisation programme is now moving ahead more strongly than ever before, I have decided to make only a modest further addition to this estimate, bringing it to £5 billion in each of the next three years. The new planning totals also contain substantial reserves, rising from £3½ billion in 1987-88 to £7½ billion in 1989-90.

The public expenditure increases I have announced allow us to make realistic provision both for local authority current expenditure, over which the Government have no direct control, and for demand-led programmes such as social security, while still leaving scope for increased spending on services to which the Government attach particular priority.

But before referring to some of the more important changes, let me make one thing absolutely clear. There can be no question of allowing the projected increases in public expenditure over the next two years to undermine the prudence of the Government's overall fiscal stance. The Government's fiscal stance has been clearly set out in the medium-term financial strategy published at the time of this year's Budget. There will be no relaxation of that stance.

Within the totality of public expenditure, the largest increase is for the local authorities, whose current spending next year is now put at £4 billion above the previous provision. This in part reflects the fact that the previous plans simply carried forward the same level of cash spending as in 1986-87. At the same time, we are increasing next year's aggregate Exchequer grant—the

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contribution that taxpayers make to local government spending — by almost 10 per cent. over this year's settlement, a rise of almost £1½ billion.

These substantial sums demonstrate in particular the priority the Government are giving to education, which, including the new proposals on pay and conditions of service for teachers announced last week, accounts for about half the total increase in provision. There is also a substantial increase in provision for the police.

On top of the increased provision for the cost of education in schools, which is contained within local authority current spending, there will be additional spending on the universities of £60 million in 1987-88 and £70 million in 1988-89.

Spending on the health and personal social services will be increased by more than £600 million. For the National Health Service alone, the increase in England amounts to more than £300 million a year. Combined with the additional resources being generated by greater efficiency, this will not only enable the Health Service to cope with the growing number of elderly patients, but will also allow it to improve services.

Gross provision for housing investment is being increased by £450 million. This will sustain the rising trend of spending on local authority renovation and improvements and provide additional resources for the housing associations.

In the light of this year's experience, £1¾ billion has been added to next year's provision for social security, most of which represents a greater expected expenditure on existing means-tested benefits.

Provision for investment in roads is being increased by £65 million next year and £75 million the year after, mostly for local authority roads.

For defence, the provision remains as planned in the last White Paper after allowing for minor changes, including a reduction in the estimated cost of the Falklands deployment. The defence programme will continue to benefit from the substantial real growth in previous years and the wide-ranging action to improve efficiency and value for money.

Taking all programmes together, the additions to planned capital expenditure amount to getting on for £1 billion in 1987-88, of which about two thirds is local authority spending. Further details of these and other changes will be contained in the printed autumn statement which will be published as soon as the House returns next week. In addition, full details, together with information on running costs and manpower, will be given in the public expenditure White Paper early in the new year.

I now turn to national insurance contributions. The Government have conducted the usual autumn review of contributions in the light of advice from the Government Actuary on the prospective income and expenditure of the national insurance fund, and taking account of the benefit uprating which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services announced on 22 October.

The lower earnings limit will be increased next April to £39 a week, in line with the single person's pension, and the upper earnings limit will be similarly raised to £295 a week. The limits for the reduced rate bands which I announced in last year's Budget will also be increased again in April but by proportionately larger amounts. The upper limit for the 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. bands will be raised to £65 a week and £100 a week respectively, and the upper limit for the 9 per cent. rate for employers will be raised to £150 a week.

The taxpayers' contribution to the national insurance fund — the so-called Treasury supplement — will be reduced by 2 per cent. to 7 per cent., but this will not require any change in contribution rates. Thus, the main class 1 contribution rates will once again remain unchanged at 9 per cent. for employees and 10·45 per cent. for employers.

Finally, I turn to the Industry Act forecast. Both growth and inflation have turned out to be slightly lower this year than I envisaged at the time of the Budget. Growth now looks like turning out at 2¼ per cent., against a Budget forecast of 3 per cent., and inflation in the fourth quarter of this year is likely to be 3¼ per cent. against the Budget forecast of 3½ per cent.

The principal reason for this slower growth has been the disappointing performance of exports, which were hard hit by the cutback in spending by OPEC and other primary producers affected by the sharp fall in commodity prices in general and the oil price in particular.

Combined with a halving in the value of our own oil exports, this has meant a significant deterioration in the current account of the balance of payments, from a surplus of some £3½ billion in 1985—and a cumulative surplus of £21 billion over the six years from 1980 to 1985 inclusive —to a forecast of broad balance for 1986.

Looking ahead to 1987, the prospects are generally encouraging.

While the necessary adjustment of the exchange rate to the oil price collapse has now taken place, it will inevitably take time before the full benefits come through in higher non-oil exports and lower import growth. This means that we can expect the current account of the balance of payments to go into deficit next year, for the first time since 1979, to the tune of some £1·5 billion. Even so, non-oil exports are forecast to rise next year by 5·5 per cent. compared with an increase of only 1 per cent. this year, with manufacturing output in consequence up by 4 per cent. And with domestic demand continuing to expand at the same rate as this year, the economy overall is likely to grow by a further 3 per cent. next year — the sixth successive year of steady growth at an average annual rate of almost 3 per cent.

Recorded inflation is likely to edge up a little, to 3·75 per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1987. This is almost entirely due to the effect on the RPI of the timing of mortgage rate changes. The Government's commitment to a monetary policy that will squeeze out inflation remains unabated.

Meanwhile the likelihood of faster growth next year, coming at a time when unemployment already appears to have stopped rising, suggests that the prospects for some fall in unemployment are now more promising. But this promise could still be frustrated by excessive pay settlements.

The strategy that we have followed since 1979 has brought inflation down to the lowest level for two decades, combined with sustained growth and steadily rising living standards. This is a combination that has eluded successive Governments for a generation. We have brought it about by the determined pursuit of free markets and sound money. And that is what we shall stick to.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): First, I welcome the increased expenditure on health, housing and education, small though the increases in the health and housing budgets are. The sick, the homeless and parents will wish that there could be a general election every year. They will wonder why they have waited so long. They will not believe that the sudden change of heart and sudden change of judgment could possibly survive a Tory election victory.

Let me tell the Chancellor straightaway that his figures and forecasts are treated with increasing suspicion, not simply inside the House, but outside it. Therefore, I shall ask him a series of specific questions about the numbers that he has half offered us today. Will he confirm that programme spending is forecast to increase by £7·5 billion in 1987-88 — £4·7 billion on the planning totals, £250 million from privatisation, and £2·58 billion from the contingency reserve?

Will the Chancellor confirm that much of that extra spending is not the result of his careful planning, but the product of overspending this year, which he attempted, but failed, to control and is now taking on into the year that follows? Education at £1·6 billion, social security at £1·6 billion and the EEC at £440 million represent expenditure to which the Chancellor was passionately opposed when they came about.

There is a coy reference in paragraph 29 of his statement to a "greater expected expenditure" on existing means-tested benefits. Translated into English, that means that long-term unemployment has been far greater than the Chancellor kept on pretending that it would be both a year ago and at Budget time. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the buoyancy of non-oil tax revenue is largely the result of wage increases which have outstripped inflation — wage increases which he has constantly condemned, which he attempted to reduce, and for which he now attempts to take the credit?

Is it surprising that, against that background, the House and the country will be wholly sceptical about the right hon. Gentleman's conversion to public spending and the continuation of such policies over a substantial period? So that we can better judge the Chancellor's sincerity, will he make it clear where he stands on the whole variety of targets that were once the centre piece of his policy? Does he support the Governor of the Bank of England in his view that broad money targets should be abandoned? If he does, will he confirm that the medium-term financial strategy, of which he is the author, has finally been laid to rest?

Furthermore, will the Chancellor tell us about the fiscal adjustment, about which we heard so much last year and the year before until it suddenly disappeared? He is right to say that we have heard nothing about it, and that is why our suspicions are increased about the honesty and integrity of his figures. In the March forecast, we were told that the figure would be £2 billion, and that has been spent. Does that mean that there will be no cuts in taxes next year or that the Chancellor will increase the public sector borrowing requirement—not dealt with in the statement —to accommodate tax increases? If he will do neither, will he once more preside over an increase in the total tax burden that the Government levy?

Does the Chancellor realise that the current account deficit is more optimistic than that predicted by any other forecast, and that each forecast is absolutely incredible? Is not the economic outturn now worse than what he predicted at Budget time in a number of crucial areas? I shall ask him, item by item, to confirm or deny that. Is it or is it not a fact that the balance of payments is £3½ billion worse than he forecast at Budget time? Is it or is it not a fact that output in the first half of this year has increased at half the speed that was forecast at Budget time? Is it or is it not a fact that exports have risen at less than one fifth of the rate forecast at Budget time?

Despite all that, and despite all those prospects being worse, the Government propose greater spending than when the prospects were better. Is the Chancellor surprised that we are sceptical about his proposals or that he is fast losing any reputation he ever possessed for financial respectability?

In previous years, in an attempt to sustain his reputation, the Chancellor has done deep damage to the real economy. Now, he is cynically pretending to change course, and one question above all must be asked of him: Having made this apparent swerve, how does he justify the waste and suffering in th seven years of his previous policy? How does he justify the cuts in Government expenditure that robbed the pensioners and closed hospitals, or the medium-term financial strategy, which added 2 million to total unemployed? That was supposed to be the price of getting the economy right. The economy is not right, yet unemployment remains at an unacceptable level. Today's statement has done nothing to help in that essential area.

Mr. Lawson: Since the right hon. Gentleman absented himself from the whole of Treasury questions to have time to mug up the questions he has just asked, I should have thought that he could have done a little better than he did. I shall do my best to answer the right hon. Gentleman's questions. I shall take them in the order that he asked them. *[Interruption.]* If right hon. and hon. Members do not want me to answer the right hon. Gentleman's questions, I shall not answer them. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to hear the Chancellor.

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the public expenditure increase. I have already announced the public expenditure increase, and it is as he says. He then referred to the buoyancy of revenues. The buoyancy of revenues is due, above all, to two facts — first, continuing vigorous economic growth and, secondly, the greatly increased profitability of companies which has led to a large increase in the yield of corporation tax.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the medium-term financial strategy. If he had been paying attention he would have heard me explicitly reaffirm the medium-term financial strategy.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the fiscal adjustment. He may not be aware that last year I announced that I would, and I did from last year, discontinue the practice of giving the fiscal adjustment, because it is a misleading and unreliable essay. Subsequent events proved the rightness of that course.

He then asked about the PSBR for next year. I made it quite clear in my statement that the PSBR in 1987-88 will be held to 1¾ per cent. of GDP. So there will be no expansion of the PSBR.

The right hon. Gentleman said that some things, such as exports, are lower this year than I forecast at the time of the Budget, and that GDP is 2¼ per cent. as against 3

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per cent. That is absolutely right, as I announced in my statement. However, inflation was lower also. The right hon. Gentleman wondered how it was, when those items had fallen short of expectations, that I could announce an increase in public expenditure. Clearly he is unaware that the public expenditure increase is for the years ahead. As I have made clear, the prospect for the years ahead is for a growth of 3 per cent.—higher than the 2½ per cent. we have had this year. The right hon. Gentleman failed to take into account the fact that, since 1982-83, public expenditure has consistently fallen as a share of gross domestic product, and will continue to do so. That is in sharp contrast to the position when the Labour party was in government when, despite the IMF, it was rising faster than GDP. That is what got us into the problems that we had in the 1970s. The right hon. Gentleman accused me —if I took down his words correctly— of "cynically pretending to change course". I can assure him that we are not changing course.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be welcomed, in as much as the borrowing requirement will not be increased but will be held as forecast? Will he re-emphasise that, this year, there is extra captial expenditure— the total is a lower proportion of GDP—and that, out of £148 billion the capital expenditure allocation will be over £22 billion?

Mr. Lawson: My right hon. Friend is right and I thank him for his remarks. Capital expenditure has been increased by almost £1 billion in 1987-88 over the previously published plans. The Opposition are on extremely shaky ground on capital expenditure because we all recall what they did to slash it on the Health Service, hospitals, roads and anything else on which they could lay their hands.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer agree that at least one conceivable weakness in his current strategy is the degree to which he is relying on the tax take that he receives from various resources as a result of the current credit boom, which is something that cannot be sustained? This is creating demand which in turn is creating consumption and imports, but it is not creating the jobs and investment that we require. The Chancellor admits in his statement that we shall have a balance of payments deficit. Could not his strategy lead to pressure on the pound in terms of interest rates and its valuation, and is it not right to say, to quote an American president, that we ain't seen nothing yet?

Mr. Lawson: That was rather a long question, if it was a question at all. If the hon. Gentleman is interested, the forecast for consumer demand in 1987 is a growth of 4 per cent. compared with 5 per cent. this year. The forecast is that consumer demand will be growing more slowly next year than this year, whereas both investment and exports will be growing more rapidly.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): The statement as a whole is welcome, but does my right hon. Friend recall that those advocating higher public expenditure have stressed the importance of concentrating on capital rather than on current expenditure? Is he satisfied with the balance between the two? Is there not cause for concern about the level of wage settlements, especially when they are linked to national wage agreements, which are a means of increasing unemployment in areas where it is highest?

Mr. Lawson: My right hon. Friend holds a position of special responsibility as the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, and he is right to point to the problems of excessive pay increases in the public sector. As I said in my statement, the greatest single area of growth is in local authority current spending. Some of the spending is very welcome, but roughly 45 per cent. of local authority current expenditure is on pay, excluding teachers' pay. The rapid rise in that expenditure, over which the Government have no direct control, is a major problem in getting the balance right between current expenditure and capital expenditure, about which my right hon. Friend is rightly concerned.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Since the last public expenditure White Paper, how much has the reserve for 1987-88 and that for the following year been reduced? In other words, how far has the Chancellor of the Exchequer eaten into that contingency reserve? Since the previous autumn statement, has the assumption for unemployment next year been increased or reduced?

Mr. Lawson: The assumption for unemployment next year will appear in the Government Actuary's report, and will be slightly higher than the figure in the Government Actuary's previous report. The right hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I am wrong, but I think that the increase is 50,000, representing an increase that has already taken place. It is not a projection of a future increase. The reserve always comes down as the year rolls closer. The reduction is especially large this year and is one of £2¾ billion, from £6¼ billion to £3½ billion for 1987-88. The reduction is rather on the large side because, as I said in my statement, and as we stated explicitly in last year's autumn statement, the figure for local authority expenditure for 1987-88 had not been agreed. Therefore, we carried forward the same cash figure for 1986-87 and stated that we had made special allowance in a specially enlarged reserve to accommodate that. This year we have put in what we consider to be a realistic assessment of local authority current expenditure for all three years.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is it not those who are lucky enough to work in the public sector who will gain most from the transformation of the star chamber into the school tuck shop? Cannot my right hon. Friend hold out any hope of reducing the heaviest burden of taxation on the lowest paid in the private sector, who do not have the advantages of those in the public sector?

Mr. Lawson: I think that some of my colleagues—I shall not mention names— who have appeared before the so-called star chamber will be slightly surprised to hear it described as a school tuck shop. My hon. Friend knows full well the nature of the Government's taxation objectives. Taxation, however, is a matter for the Budget and not one for now. Clearly a pound cannot be used twice. A pound which is used in higher public expenditure is not available for reductions in taxation.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The Chancellor announced in his statement an increase of £450 million in expenditure on housing. As the Government, in their report last year, estimated that £20 billion were

required to bring local authority housing stock into a livable state of repair, do my constituents now have to wait 41 years for repairs to be carried out?

Mr. Lawson: I do not accept the figures which the hon. Gentleman has quoted, which were put together by local authorities, which made their own assessments of what they thought was necessary. The figures were published subsequently by the Department of the Environment. The statistics were provided by the local authorities in the various areas. The increase in housing expenditure, which I have announced, is an important one, and I hope that Opposition Members will not deride it.

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): If my right hon. Friend is still seeking reductions in the absolute levels of expenditure in addition to the proportionate levels to which he referred, and large consequential reductions in taxation — we hope that we shall hear much more of both matters in his Budget next year — will he give urgent consideration to the proposal, which I think is supported in all quarters of the House, for the repatriation of agricultural policy? The runaway extavagance of the common agricultural policy is not only a continuing scandal, but the indiferrence of the member Governments of the European Community in grappling with it is something which is causing great impatience throughout the nation.

Mr. Lawson: I am sure that my right hon. Friend knows that Britain and its Government are taking the lead in seeking the reforms of the CAP that are long overdue. The problems of overproduction and subsidisation of food and agriculture are not peculiar to the European Community. It is a worldwide phenomenon: it is exactly the same in the United States, Japan and throughout the industrialised world. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, at the Tokyo summit earlier this year, insisted on having for the first time in a summit communiqué mention made of a problem which the whole world must address. It is one of the greatest problems facing the world over the next 10 years.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer recognise that the ending of the long run of large surpluses on the current account of the balance of payments should be greatly welcomed in view of its beneficial effect upon the level of economic and, particularly, industrial activity?

Mr. Lawson: I note the right hon. Gentleman's views, although I do not believe that the linkage is quite as simple as he suggests.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): If there is to be an increase of £4·75 billion above the planned totals for public expenditure next year, and if, as my right hon. Friend says, there is to be no relaxation of the Government's fiscal stance, is it safe to conclude that there will be, thanks to the vigour and dynamism of the economy next year, a natural increase in revenue of about the same amount? If that is right, is it not an encouraging prospect for those of us who still want to see substantial tax cuts?

Mr. Lawson: I share my right hon. Friend's desire to see substantial, continuing tax cuts, but we shall have to wait until next year's Budget to see what the prospects will be.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does the Chancellor seriously deny that, although he has been talking about the prudence of the Government's overall fiscal stance, the reality is that he has just begun to paddle his electoral canoe with a moderate expansion financed by privatisation? Will he recognise that he will not get very far with the dead weight of mass unemployment costing £20 billion? The sooner he addresses his mind to that fact, the better it will be for the country and, indeed, for the Government.

Mr. Lawson: I share the right hon. Gentleman's concern at the level of unemployment. I should have hoped that he would welcome the fact that, over the past six months there has been no increase in unemployment. The most recent seasonally adjusted figures are the same as they were six months ago. As for paddling electoral conoes, I can well understand why the right hon. Gentleman is so nervous about the prospect of an election.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the autumn statement again refutes the bogus accusation that the Government have written off Scotland? Will he confirm that Government spending on public services in Scotland is now greater in real terms than it was in 1979 and that Scotland is also getting better value for money, as Government funds are aimed at greater efficiency in the public services and the creation of new jobs in the private sector rather than subsidising industries that are no longer competitive?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. He might also have added that we are blessed with a Scottish Chief Secretary.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Chancellor reflect on the fact that, seven years after the Conservative party came to power and after receiving £50 billion in revenue from North sea oil, he predicts an encouraging internationally competitive position in 1987. What does he mean by "encouraging" in terms of the balance of payments and current account? In terms of North sea oil advance petroleum revenue tax, what effect is this likely to have on the cash flows of oil companies and on exploratory and development activities in the North sea in relation to Scottish employment?

Mr. Lawson: It is encouraging that the forecast is for growth of 3 per cent. in 1987—the sixth successive year of growth of 3 per cent. or thereabouts — and of inflation remaining low.

As for the North sea oil picture, with special reference to Scotland, about which the hon. Gentleman is something of an expert, the APRT change is deliberately geared precisely to the point to which he adverted. That is why it will require immediate legislation. It is to help the immediate cash flow position, particularly of smaller independent companies. That has an important bearing on the workload of the offshore supply industry in Scotland and in the north-east of England. It is a repayment of tax that has already been paid by them.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): In deciding what weight to give the shadow Chancellor's advice on these matters, will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that 15 December marks the eleventh anniversary of the infamous letter from a former Chancellor to the managing director of the International Monetary Fund and that that letter had been preceded by a rate of inflation of 26·9 per cent? Will my

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right hon. Friend take this opportunity to reaffirm his own commitment and that of the Prime Minister to stable prices by the end of the next Parliament?

Mr. Lawson: That is certainly our aim and ambition. Having got inflation down, as my hon. Friend pointed out, from 26·9 per cent. at its peak during the last Labour Government to 3 per cent. today, it is the aim and ambition of the Government and myself to reach stable prices by the end of the next Parliament.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Will the Chancellor come clean and admit to the House that, along with the abandonment of his monetary targets, the autumn statement and the accompanying boasting press releases about public expenditure today, he has completed the abandonment of his past monetarist policies? Will he admit that he is doing that to generate a short-term pre-election boom to seek a short-term party political benefit? Will he confirm that the long-term damage of the policy is borne out by the £1·5 billion balance of payments deficit, which he forecast this afternoon, and the assumption that there will still be over 3 million people unemployed in 1990? Will he change his policies so that demand is channelled into investment and exports rather than into consumption and imports?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is extraordinary. It is almost inevitable that, given the halving of our oil export earnings virtually overnight, there would be a period during which the balance of payments in the current account would go to deficit before the non-oil majority of the economy could increase their exports sufficiently and compete more effectively against imports. That is what will happen. As I pointed out in my earlier remarks, non-oil exports are expected to rise by 5½ per cent., almost twice the rate of the economy as a whole, and non-oil business investment is likely to rise about 3 per cent. in line with the rise in the economy as a whole. I am talking about a balanced growth, not one that is loaded particularly on to consumption, with consumption, investments and exports all going ahead.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to bear in mind that there is to be a further statement after this one, and there is also to be an economic debate. I will allow questions to go on for a further 10 minutes on this matter, during which time I hope that each hon. Member who has risen will be called. Those who are seeking to take part in the subsequent debate might reserve their questions until then.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on achieving a remarkable balance between obtaining the responsible management of the economy that we have expected from the Government until now and acceding to the reasonable requests of those who wanted an element of greater expenditure. How does my right hon. Friend see the economic environment in the current year, particularly for the business sector, to which we look for the generation of wealth in the future and, indeed, of future employment?

Mr. Lawson: The continuing low inflation and the high company profitability which is enjoyed in the corporate sector—the highest for about 20 years—coupled with the benefit that the non-oil sector has enjoyed arising from the adjustment of the exchange rate to the fall in oil prices, give British industry, and particularly British manufacturing industry, an unparalleled opportunity. I am sure they are capable of grasping that opportunity, and I hope they do so.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): The Chancellor in his autumn statement, if I recall it correctly, expressed the hope for a reduction in unemployment from 1987. The Government actuarial figures, to which he referred, suggest an immediate increase in unemployment. In June or July this year, the Secretary of State for Employment forecast a reduction in unemployment by the end of this year. Can the Chancellor explain what these contradictory statements mean, if anything at all?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparbrook (Mr. Hattersley) in his question about unemployment, correctly pointed out that the Government Actuary's figure was not a forecast but an assumption based on the current rate of unemployment. It is an assumption that has been adopted by Governments of both parties.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): So that this will be clearly understood by the local authority negotiators, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the increases in the education provision are intended to fund only the level of settlement suggested last week by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and not a penny more?

Mr. Lawson: Most certainly. The extremely generous settlement on teachers' pay which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced is a decision. There is no question of any more being paid to the teachers than the substantial increases announced by my right hon. Friend. The total provision for the whole of the responsibilities of the Department of Education and Science—schools, universities and everything else has risen by £2¼ billion over the previous published plans.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Since the junior health Minister declared at the Dispatch Box last Friday that she was more than happy with a 30 per cent. cut in non-emergency ambulance services in London, may we assume that none of the £300 million which the Chancellor has announced will go to restore those grievous cuts?

Mr. Lawson: Those are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Services.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend think that the response to his autumn statement by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was rather dyspeptic, as though he had just, unusually, had to swallow something that he found disagreeable? The right hon. Gentleman referred to Government cuts, but is it not the case that, in every year since 1979, public spending has increased in real terms and that the statement, in effect, announced that that trend will continue? Does not my right hon. Friend foresee after the next general election our Government getting to grips with public spending and being able to make real reductions in it?

Mr. Lawson There has been a steady improvement on the position that we inherited. Taking general

Government expenditure and deducting from it privatisation proceeds in order to obtain the steady underlying trend, public expenditure increased in real terms by about 3 per cent. a year, year in, year out, over the 10 years before 1978-79. That is why, as I said earlier, we got into the difficulties we did. During the first Parliament under the Government, we reduced that increase to 2¼ per cent. a year. During this Parliament, we have reduced it further to 1¾ per cent. a year so far. Over the three years to come, we plan to reduce it further to 1 per cent. a year.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): In his late and quite inadequate reference to unemployment, the Chancellor said that relief could only be prejudiced by high wage settlements, despite the virtual stagnation of private sector investment. Where in his statement can the Chancellor point to a single measure that might alleviate that upward pressure on interest rates which is preventing the revival of private sector investment?

Mr. Lawson: There is no stagnation of private sector investment. Private sector investment — I may have something to say about this in the following debate — has risen in the upswing since the middle of 1981 faster than consumer spending. The forecast for 1987 — this is the new fact which I have to tell the House — is for non-oil business investment to rise by about 3 per cent., or perhaps even a little more, fully in line with the growth of the economy as a whole. That is by no measure stagnation.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): If monetary indicators are no longer a good guideline to over-heating in the economy, will my right hon. Friend tell us what factors in the economy are now a good guide to over-heating?

Mr. Lawson: Monetary indicators are very important. I urge my hon. Friend, because of his deep and abiding interest in this subject, to read carefully the lecture by the Governor of the Bank of England at Loughborough which went into the matter in immense detail and was very persuasive, explaining the difficulties in interpreting broad money aggregates. However, MO — the narrowest of the aggregates — does not suffer from these deficiencies. It will be easier to see whether that is on track. I am glad to say that it is.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Chancellor of the Exchequer aware that, next year, in the London borough of Newham the local authority will spend almost £3 million on bed and breakfast charges, whereas in 1984 it was spending only about £92,000? Will the right hon. Gentleman allow the London borough of Newham and the other local authorities to spend the almost £6 billion that is now in bank accounts, built up through the sale of council houses in capital receipts? If the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to give that sanction, will he please explain how spending accumulated capital receipts affects the public sector borrowing requirement?

Mr. Lawson: It is clear that all public expenditure affects the public sector borrowing requirement, whether it is notionally financed out of accumulated receipts — which in practice may often have been spent anyway — or not.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that by far the most disturbing aspect of his statement is the 9 per cent. overspend by local authorities? Will he join me in urging my colleagues who represent shire counties to press upon county councillors the advice and the example given to them by business interests and to take independent advice on the management of their services with a view to obtaining reductions in costs?

Mr. Lawson: I agree with my hon. Friend. County councillors and, indeed, all councillors on important councils will be well-advised to do that.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Are the estimates of Britain's contribution to the EEC budget over the next three years based on a continuation of the maximum VAT rate at 1·4 per cent.? If so, is that not a very unwise assumption?

Mr. Lawson: The answer to the first question is yes. the answer to the second question is no.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): What account has my right hon. Friend been able to take of the projected rate rise in many Labour-controlled councils, such as Ealing where rate increases of between 50 and 100 per cent. are expected next April after the Labour council has been one year in power? Is my right hon. Friend aware of the devastating effect that that will have on the local economy and on people's ability to pay their rates?

Mr. Lawson: I fully understand the problem to which my hon. Friend alludes. The practice of Labour councillors, cynically pushing up expenditure and the rates and not caring who gets hurt — whether it is the householders or the small business man — does immense damage. We have sought to limit that damage by the introduction of rate capping in a number of areas. That has protected the ratepayers in those areas, but in many areas that are not rate capped Labour councillors are able to do, and are doing, great damage.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Chancellor of the Exchequer aware that, if the BBC dared broadcast the truth about what he has had to say today, it might suggest that a pawnbroker stood up in the House of Commons, masquerading as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, surrounded by mountains of debts? It might suggest that that same man was handing out a few electoral bribes, never mentioning the fact that in seven years the credit card holders have become indebted to the tune of £27 billion and that the average family's debt as a proportion of real disposable income has gone up from 45 per cent. to 70 per cent. and that the Government borrowed $4 billion only seven weeks ago to bail out this failing economy and then, having finished what he had to say, having not mentioned anything about unemployment and the prospects for those people who are out of work, he turned like a corkscrew and sat down next to the right hon. Lady who used to occupy the place called Grantham café, which has finished up as one of the 100,000 bankruptcies in Britain during the right hon. Gentleman's seven years' rule.

Mr. Lawson: Not even the BBC would be guilty of the hon. Gentleman's flight of fancy.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Following the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), will my right hon. Friend confirm that the £1·5 billion, or 10 per cent., increase in aggregate Exchequer grant should not be seen as an encouragement of profligacy in local

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government? On the contrary, it should be seen as an encouragement for local government to emulate central Government in contracting out and in the privatisation of services — something that many local authorities, even Conservative ones, have signally hitherto failed to do.

Mr. Lawson: I agree with my hon. Friend about the desirability of local authorities' contracting out and privatisation. Unfortunately, an insufficient number have done so, but those that have pursued that policy have gained great benefit for their ratepayers and need to pursue it further. What we have decided by way of aggregate Exchequer grant is fully sufficient for the needs of local authorities in Britain. I hope that there will be no occasion for anybody to suggest otherwise.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): With regard to the increase in public expenditure which has just been announced by the right hon. Gentleman, how much will go to Scotland?

Mr. Lawson: I have not the precise figures in my head. The hon. Gentleman will know full well that public expenditure per head in Scotland is considerably higher than public expenditure per head in England.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the increased public expenditure on education — provided it is tied, as the Government rightly insist that it must be, to copper-bottomed staff contracts and a rigorous squeeze on local authority extravagance — should be properly regarded not simply as an increase in current expenditure but something quantitatively different — an investment in the future productive capacity of the nation?

Mr. Lawson: I think that we have a chance, with the decision, and its ramifications, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has announced, of achieving a much needed transformation in our education system. That will result in teachers becoming professionals once again — which they were in danger of ceasing to be — and will be of great benefit to children. It will also benefit the future of this country, both its economic and wider future.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Can the Chancellor explain why he did not mention interest rates in his statement, especially as they have just gone up again? Industry, public services and employers are dependent on these rates. What does he propose to do to bring the interest rate down below 10 per cent? Interest rates have never reached that level under this Government.

Mr. Lawson: Interest rates have been below 10 per cent. during this Parliament. The hon. Gentleman is misinformed.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Chancellor said that he did not have the expenditure figures for Scotland in his head. As far as I can make out, looking at the papers in the Vote Office, they are not available there either.

Can the right hon. Gentleman explain why, in a statement which had an air of unreality about it, Scotland in particular has been treated in this unreal way? He will remember that normally there are separate figures for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This year there is a new beast — territorial and other Departments. That appears to cover Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland certain parts of the Property Services Agency and Civil Service superannuation, which are linked in one aggregate figure. Can the Chancellor explain why this is so, and, having abolished Scotland in this rather cavalier and offhand way, will he guarantee that these aggregate figures are given at an early date and apologise to Scottish Members for this ludicrous situation in which it is impossible to get any impression of the impact of the statement in Scotland or the other parts of the United Kingdom to which I have referred?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman really should not be so impatient. It was only today that the Cabinet agreed, as I announced, the public expenditure figures for the year. It is not customary for the House to be informed on the very day of the Cabinet decision. I thought that it would help the House if I did so on this occasion.

The figures for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales will be published in the normal way, in the printed autumn statement that will appear on Wednesday.

Helicopter Crash (Sumburgh)

4.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): I am sorry to have to inform the House that at approximately 11.30 today, a Chinook helicopter belonging to British International Helicopters crashed into the sea approximately two miles east of Sumburgh in Shetland. The helicopter was inbound from the Brent field to Sumburgh with 47 people on board—three crew and 44 passengers. A coastguard helicopter which happened to be lifting off from Sumburgh airport at the time was at the scene of the accident almost immediately and recovered two survivors. The survivors were flown to Lerwick for treatment. A number of surface vessels, including the local lifeboat and helicopters, are now at the scene of the accident. No further survivors have so far been found. Eighteen bodies have been recovered. There will be a full investigation by my chief inspector of accidents. A team of investigators has already left for the scene of the accident, as has my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who is responsible for aviation.

I know the House will join me in expressing its condolences to the bereaved and in commending the rescue services for their prompt action.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept the wish of the House to be associated with his condolences for the bereaved as a result of this appalling tragedy? I wish to be associated with his commendation of the rescue services. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that accidents of this kind remind us that we still pay a high price in human terms for the successful exploitation of our North sea oil reserves?

Was any distress signal from the helicopter seen before the accident? Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman accept and pass on the sympathy of the House to those still awaiting news of people missing in this tragic accident?

Mr. Moore: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's first and last points. I know the House shares his sentiments. The hon. Gentleman is right to pay tribute to those whose tenacity, courage and ingenuity have won for our nation such resources from the seas at such clear human cost. We owe them all a debt.

From the information which I have received, no warning signal was given.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I also wish to be associated with the condolences to the bereaved which have been expressed at this horrific accident. I have travelled in a Chinook helicopter to the North sea rigs a good many times. I would appreciate any more information at this early stage about what exactly happened. My right hon. Friend will be aware that people in these usually safe vehicles wear wetsuits. If the helicopter has to ditch into the sea the passengers can usually survive for some considerable time. The appalling tragedy of the number of deaths in this case suggests that something very much worse happened — perhaps an explosion before the helicopter hit the water. Have there been any reports from witnesses at the scene?

Mr. Moore: I recognise what my right hon. Friend has to say and the experiences he gained during his time at the Energy Department, as I gained during my days there.

I have come to the House with all the information that I have at the moment. There was in fact—coincidentally—a coastguard helicopter which had lifted off from Sumburgh and which was at the scene almost instantly.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I thank the Secretary of State for coming to the House so promptly to make a statement on what is an appalling catastrophe that many of us had feared might happen but hoped would not. Will he also accept our condolences from this Bench? I have spoken by telephone to my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), in whose constituency this accident occurred. He is unable to be here due to a constituency engagement but was anxious to express his sympathies and condolences at this tragedy.

I have been advised that the helicopter was seen to fall out of the sky from a height of 500 ft and it broke on impact with the water. The bodies which have been removed from the water were wearing lifejackets, but these had not been inflated, indicating that there was no warning and that no distress signal was issued.

Will the Minister, to assure the many people who fly regularly, confirm that we will get a quick inquiry into the accident and a quick declaration of the cause? Is he prepared, if necessary, to ground other Chinooks? Regrettably, this is not the first time that such an incident has occurred to a Chinook. I am sure we will appreciate that there is concern among those who, as has been said, must fly to their work tomorrow. If the Minister can give that assurance, the House and the families concerned will be grateful.

Mr. Moore: I welcome the expression of condolences from the hon. Member who represents that part of the world. I have said as much as I can at this stage about the complete absence of warning. By coincidence, a coastguard helicopter was on the spot almost instantly. I cannot go into any more detail. The great benefit of the statutory and independent role of the chief inspector in my Department in instances such as these is that any information which calls for a change in conditions or safety arrangements can be recommended to the Civil Aviation Authority immediately, and even before the investigation is over. We ought to control any suggestions about safety until we have learnt a little more about the incident.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I also express my condolences. If the accident investigation branch of my right hon. Friend's Department requires additional resources, will my right hon. Friend call in the Royal Air Force directorate of flight safety, which has considerable operational experience of the military version of the aircraft?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. If there is a need for additional resources, we will do that. Co-operation between the military and my Department is very close on these matters. As far as I can see, there is no need for additional resources at this stage, but proper investigation of the incident will not be impeded by a lack of resources.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): May I associate myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) with the sympathy that has been expressed? Does the Secretary of State agree that, in spite of this sad accident, we should keep in mind the splendid record of these machines on errands of mercy and life saving generally during the past few years?

Mr. Moore: I very much welcome the right hon. Gentleman's comments. I also want to be associated with his comments about the tremendous work that is done around our shores. I recognise the great safety record that we have so far enjoyed. We shall want to investigate this incident further.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): As, until today's appalling tragedy, the worst helicopter crash occurred in the Isles of Scilly, which are in my constituency, may I be associated with my right hon. Friend's expression of condolences? Although it seems from first reports that the circumstances of the two crashes are quite different and involve a different type of helicopter, will my right hon. Friend tell me, perhaps in writing, whether all the recommendations of the inquiry into the Isles of Scilly crash have been carried out?

Mr. Moore: I shall give my hon. Friend a precise answer and ensure that the information is given to the House. As a result of the Scilly Isles crash, the CAA had to improve standards and conditions for helicopter flying. If the present investigation makes further recommendations, the CAA will be advised and I trust that it will insist on the implementation of any new conditions.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State accept that, especially in Scottish Labour minds, this is a severe tragedy? In view of the record of oil companies—Shell is involved here—and the helicopter company and bearing in mind the remoteness of the Shetlands, can the right hon. Gentleman give us some idea of the facilities that have been offered to the next of kin to enable them to get to Sumburgh to alleviate some of the grief? Does he agree that the number of people who have apparently been killed is high, bearing in mind the safety provisions involved in such operations? Is that not most disturbing? Although we want an expeditious inquiry, we want a thorough inquiry into the nature and background of the Chinook and the relevant safety requirements.

Mr. Moore: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance for which he asks. There is no question but that this must be a most thorough investigation by my chief inspector in the accident investigation branch. I should like to consider the hon. Gentleman's quite legitimate point about remoteness. We are aware of the difficulty of the distances involved. We must concern ourselves with the bereaved. I shall consider that matter with as much sympathy as I can.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): If this tragic accident is found to be the result of a mechanical malfunction, does it not call into question the apparent preference of the British Army for Chinook helicopters rather than smaller British made helicopters as a means of transporting troops? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the investigation includes Ministry of Defence personnel and that the results of it are fully disclosed?

Mr. Moore: I think it quite inappropriate for me to draw any further conclusions than the ones that I have already drawn with the information that I have now.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I associate myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends with the expressions of sadness that we all feel at this appalling tragedy.

Although the right hon. Gentleman is right not to speculate about the causes of the accident, is he aware that those of us who have constituents who travel daily on such transport will want to know the inquiry's findings as soon as possible to end any possible speculation?

Mr. Moore: I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I also understand the nature of activity in his constituency, having visited Dounreay. I shall make every effort to ensure that the House receives every possible piece of information. The most important thing is to ensure that there is a thorough investigation and to act upon its findings. We must do that first.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I also express my condolences. Does my right hon. Friend know whether the helicopter was carrying a flight recorder or a cockpit voice recorder?

Mr. Moore: I am sorry, but I cannot answer that question now. I shall let my hon. Friend and the rest of the House know the answer through a letter placed in the Library.

Master J. R. Bickford Smith

4.45 pm

Mr. Speaker: I undertook yesterday to consider the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) about the Attorney-General's answer in last Tuesday's *Hansard* giving the results of an investigation into the allegations made by the hon. Member regarding the case of Tubero *v.* Toomey and others.

The hon. Member put to me three specific points. He asked first, whether it was not

"a gross abuse of both Houses" — [*Official Report*, 5 November 1986; Vol. 103 c. 955.]

for the Lord Chancellor to have set up an inquiry into the hon. Member's allegations and then, without any reference to the hon. Member, to have announced the result of the inquiry in an answer given by the Attorney-General to a written question. To that point, I can only reply that since the hon. Member, as he himself said, asked the Lord Chancellor to set up an inquiry, it is for the Lord Chancellor to decide what form the inquiry should take and how its result should be announced. The Attorney-General, of course, answers for the Lord Chancellor in this House. As far as reference to the hon. Member is concerned, while that is a matter of courtesy between hon. Members and not a rule of the House, I hope it will always be observed.

In his second point, the hon. Member asked me whether it was proper to impugn the integrity of a Member by means of the question and answer procedure, instead of putting down a substantive motion for that purpose. In considering that point, I think it has to be borne in mind that last Tuesday's written answer summarised the results of an inquiry into the hon. Member's allegations. The answer consists largely of a rebuttal of those allegations. It also includes criticism of the hon. Member's conduct in presentation of his case. It is a long-established principle that criticism of a Member's conduct should be embodied in a substantive motion.

Finally, the hon. Member asks me to which Members of the judiciary the rule applies which requires reflection on conduct to be embodied in a substantive motion. The answer is set out in "Erskine May" at page 378, which specifies:

"Judges of the superior courts of the United Kingdom, including persons holding the position of a judge, such as a judge in a court of bankruptcy and a county court, or a recorder."

I am satisfied that masters of the Supreme Court do not fall within this category.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): I of course accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and apologise if, in my parliamentary answer, I went further than parliamentary convention allows. The substance of my answer was a complete rebuttal of the allegations, but I regret that the answer also reflected on the conduct of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) in an unparliamentary way.

BBC (Libel Action)

4.48 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise, after two long statements, for wearying the House, but this is an important matter which affects the privileges of the House.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has on many occasions recently sought to use the privilege of the House to call into question the conduct, or alleged conduct, of Mr. David Mitchell, an employee of Conservative Central Office, whom he has accused of having interfered with witnesses in a libel action, recently disposed of, which I had against the BBC. That is a serious criminal offence.

You will recall that on Tuesday the hon. Member for Workington announced, on a point of order, that he was sending a transcript of a tape recording of a conversation to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. My right hon. and learned Friend yesterday wrote to the hon. Gentleman to say that in that tape recording he could find no evidence or material which would justify his asking the police to carry out an inquiry. He also sent that transcript to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who concurred with my right hon. and learned Friend's conclusion. I should like to ask whether it would be appropriate for the hon. Member for Workington, whom we all know to be a man of the highest integrity, to apologise now to Mr. David Mitchell for having made allegations about him for which there is no foundation?

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe that the Attorney-General has given the matter his fullest consideration. For a start, the Attorney-General, during his reply, has pointedly refused to respond to any of the statements made by the parties to the transcript on interference with witnesses. At no stage in the reply does he refer to what they say. The fact that the transcript indicates, indeed states, in the words of one of the parties to the transcript, that a cover-up was organised by Conservative Central Office seems unimportant to him. He refuses to be drawn on that.

The fact that the transcript draws attention to the prospect of perjury by witnesses he treats as unimportant and refuses to be drawn on it. In his reply to me he does not refer to the fact that the transcript points to the changing of stories by witnesses and hon. Members, and to pressure being exerted by Mr. David Mitchell. The fact that potential witnesses were frightened by the prospect of being identified and their names published in national newspapers and were modifying their evidence to avoid embarrassment seems unimportant to him. It is all in the transcript and he refuses to be drawn on it.

It is absurd for anyone to suggest that the evidence as submitted did not warrant an inquiry by the police. The Attorney-General, who refuses to be drawn on the matter of political pressure over the Westland leak, is the same man who today refuses to be drawn on the question of political pressure on witnesses to the BBC trial. No one should believe what is being said by the Attorney-General.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot see any point of order that arises for me in this. I have not heard the tape. It is not a matter of order; it is very much a matter for debate.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that there is a point of order here. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), who is in the Chamber, suggested on 27 October that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) would have said, had you not cut him short, that as many as 17 out of 20 witnesses may have been persuaded to withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot get into a debate on this. Will the hon. Gentleman come to a point of order which I can seek to answer?

Mr. Howarth: Is it in order for hon. Members who have been cleared by the Attorney-General to be mentioned in that way? Is it not incumbent upon the hon. Member for Workington to name those people and place the transcript in the Library, so that we can all see it?

Mr. Speaker: I think that we have dealt with that matter. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not even in the Chamber.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I am, just.

Mr. Speaker: Well, stay there. I think that we dealt with this matter on Tuesday. I cannot see any point of order for me.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a separate point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), under the cloak of privilege, has been able to make certain challenges to the answers given by the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions, may I ask you to rule that the hon. Gentleman should place the tapes to which he is referring in the Library of the House?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. The tapes are not an official document.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I would be more than happy if the Attorney-General would use the power and the right that he has, and which I do not have, to place that transcript, under the cover of privilege, in the Library. I ask him to do so.

Animal Liberation Front

4.54 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the distribution of a booklet correlating Animal Liberation Front activities and containing instructions on how to make incendiary devices and fire bombs."

Two days ago an animal rights campaigner in Herefordshire let it be known that he was deeply concerned and disgusted at a leaflet and booklet that he had received through the post. I now have a copy of that sinister booklet and I am appalled by its content. The content is a wide incitement to action to cause damage. Most important is the explicitly detailed instruction on how to make incendiary devices and how to use them to maximum effect.

Regardless of the views that hon. Members may hold on the complicated and knotty issues of animal welfare and rights, I am sure that all hon. Members have a serious interest in the safety of their constituents and in the general rule of law. The fact that a leaflet is being freely distributed across the country at this time which gives such explicit details of how to assemble incendiary devices from everyday household materials, and how to plant them for greatest effect, must surely be a matter of immediate concern to the House. The fact that it is being widely distributed, as it claims, is even more worrisome, since it will inevitably become of interest to a wider readership than simply those interested in animal rights, who could be disposed towards mischief, innocent or otherwise, with injury or loss of life resulting. That underlines the seriousness and urgency of the matter.

I hope that peaceful recipients of this anonymous publication will waste no time in burning the copies sent to them, or will let their views be known to the publisher, if they know who it is. The House should be given an early opportunity to express its revulsion at such tactics and to discharge its duty to alert the public to a threat to public order which is being built up as a consequence of this irresponsible and reprehensible course of action from extremists, whoever they are.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the distribution of a booklet correlating Animal Liberation Front activities and containing instructions on how to make incendiary devices and fire bombs."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said. I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. However, I hope that he will find other ways to bring this important matter before the Chamber.

Opposition Day

[20TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Economic Policy

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Opposition Front Bench spokesman to move the motion, I must announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister and that I shall introduce the ten minutes limit on speeches between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

4.58 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's continued operation of economic policies which produce intolerable levels of unemployment, prohibitive interest rates, cuts in public sector capital spending, the destruction of the nation's manufacturing base and a serious loss of the British share in world trade; and calls upon the Government to accept that its economic strategy has failed and to replace it with policies for the real economy which promote investment, growth, employment and exports.

Anyone who heard today's autumn statement will agree that the Government are certainly not steering the same course as last year. Indeed, they are steering no steady course at all. Part of the reason for the swerving and skidding is the ambiguity over the medium-term financial strategy. Were the Chancellor not operating his normal levels of courtesy, which make it obligatory for him never to be here when a debate begins, I would direct questions to him specifically on that subject. As it is, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will no doubt whisper in his ear when he condescends to arrive.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): In all fairness, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) will recall that he was not here throughout the whole of Treasury questions this afternoon. I shall make clear and careful notes of what the right hon. Gentleman says. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be here shortly.

Mr. Hattersley: No one except the Chief Secretary would regard there as being anything like a parallel between those cases. It is clear that the Chancellor is not here, and in his absence I shall ask a number of questions about the medium-term financial strategy, of which the Chancellor is the only true begetter and author, and for which he must take responsibility.

The Chancellor insists that the medium-term financial strategy is still in place. I do not believe that that view is accepted anywhere outside the House, nor do I believe that it is accepted by the Chancellor in truth or in honesty. The medium-term financial strategy has either been mortally wounded, or is dead, and so it should be. The strategy is built around the implicit faith that rigorous fiscal and monetary policies will inevitably lead to solutions of the problems of the real economy. That is clearly not so. Even if we are to believe—and it will stretch credulity to breaking point—that the strategy remains, and even if the Chancellor repudiates the Governor of the Bank of England's view on broad money, it is clear that the MTFS has failed and that the economic recovery which it was claimed would automatically be brought about by that strategy's application has not come about and will not come about until there is a change of policies. The effects of the failure cannot honestly be denied, although I have no doubt that the Chancellor will attempt to deny them.

I should like to begin with four examples. Much of Government policy for almost eight years has been designed to hold down interest rates, yet today real interest rates are not only the highest in our history, but are the highest in the industrialised world. The balance of payments, which Government policy proposed to bring into a full year's surplus of £3·5 billion, has slumped into deficit. Indeed, in seven years the Government have converted a surplus of £4 million in the manufacturing account into a £4 billion deficit.

Employment in this country, which the Government claim to have increased—indeed, in the amendment that we are to debate, still claim to have increased—has actually fallen by 1,207,000 since 1979. The Government will have to learn to live with the fact that many of us recall that the Government were elected in 1979, and we are not prepared to start counting their achievements over the past three years alone.

I notice that the Chancellor has just entered the Chamber. I shall give way to him if he wants to apologise for his absence.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I was absent for the first few minutes of the right hon. Gentleman's speech—which I regret—for exactly the same reason as he was absent through all of Treasury questions, although he has not expressed any regret for that. This is a rather busy day.

Mr. Hattersley: I was absent from the Chamber during Treasury questions because I was reading the Chancellor's autumn statement. I had hoped that the Chancellor would deliver it before 4.30 this afternoon.

I was describing some of the Government's failures. I had dealt with interest rates and was talking about the bogus claims that the Chancellor and his colleagues have made about employment. I repeat for the Chancellor's benefit that employment in this country has actually fallen by 1,207,000 since 1979. Indeed, in Britain over the past seven years we have lost more jobs than the rest of the EEC countries combined. We have lost more than 2 million full-time jobs. We have lost 11,000 jobs in the last quarter, and 114,000 jobs in manufacturing industry in the year to August 1986.

The figures for men and women actually in work, catastrophic though they are, are the figures which the Government attempt to use as a diversion from their unemployment record. On an honest calculation of unemployment—the calculation which the Government inherited—unemployment now stands at almost 4 million. On the Government's own massaged figures it is 3,333,000. On the Government's own initially secret forecast it will be 3,100,000 at the beginning of the next decade. Indeed, we heard from the Chancellor this afternoon that the Government Actuary's report has increased the assumption on unemployment since the report was published last year.

If, in 1979, the BBC had predicted that the result of seven years of Conservative government would be record unemployment, record real interest rates, a collapsing balance of payments and a net job loss of 2 million, the chairman of the Conservative party would have accused it of Bolshevik bias.

[Mr. Hattersley]

The charge sheet is very much longer than that. It includes a record number of company liquidations, the highest total tax bill in British history and the lowest value for sterling ever. The charge sheet is well known in this country, and so is the plea of mitigation. The Government say, and the Chancellor said again this afternoon, that they have done very well on inflation. The Government inherited a retail prices index of 10·3 per cent. They doubled that, largely by a massive increase in value added tax. Then, at a terrible cost to jobs, output and public services, the RPI came down to 3 per cent., although it is now rising again.

In June the Chancellor said:

"our rate of inflation is, if anything, below the European Community average".—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1986; Vol. 98, c. 758.]

That is a wonderful example of the power of selection that the Chancellor has over statistics. I concede at once how perfectly true that is and that we are doing better than Spain and Greece. However, if we compare the British record with that of other industrialised countries, which are a fair comparison, we find that the picture is very different.

I should like to quote some figures from *British Business*, the Government's own publication. It shows that inflation is 3 per cent. in the United Kingdom, 2 per cent. in France, 1·6 per cent. in America, 0·8 per cent. in Belgium, 0·1 per cent. in Japan, and in Germany minus 0·4 per cent.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): As the right hon. Gentleman is talking about records, will he remind us when between 1974 and 1979 inflation stood at 3 per cent.?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman knows the answer. Let me give him the other parallel. If he were to compare inflation in Britain with that in the rest of Europe, he would find that it is in no way to the Labour Government's discredit when compared with this Government's record.

Mr. Lawson: Yes, it is.

Mr. Hattersley: The Chancellor says that it is. He will have the opportunity to quote the figures in a moment.

The truth is that, despite the reduction in oil prices and the other factors that have come to the Government's aid, the achievements of which the Government boast are relatively poor compared with what has happened in the EEC. While that part of the Government's record is relatively poor, the rest of the Government's record is absolutely castastrophic. The Government's failure is the Chancellor's personal failure. He is the author of the medium-term financial strategy and the inventor of the nominal targets, and it is the pursuit of those targets which has devastated the real economy.

I know very well that the Chancellor's response will be to defend himself with selective statistics, false comparisons and bogus forecasts. The time has come to deal with some of the sleight of hand in which the Chancellor specialises from debate to debate. The obvious example is that we are told that output in this country is at its highest level in history. So it is, but all that that means is that we are no longer doing worse than we were on the day that the Conservatives were elected. For some years we were doing worse than on election day.

Although we are no longer doing worse than on the day that the Prime Minister entered No. 10 Downing street, we are still doing spectacularly badly. Since 1979 the economy has expanded at an annual average of 1·4 per cent. In the previous 30 years the figure was 2·6 per cent. If the Chancellor, or the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), wants to ask what the figure was during the Labour Government, let me tell them that it was 1·8 per cent. over the entire period that we were in office—a great deal better than the Government's record since the election.

The Chancellor tells us, too, that exports are at a record level. We are not told that a combination of expanding world trade and a boom in consumer spending has caused imports to rise at an even faster rate. We are not told that we are losing our share of world trade while increasing the volume and value of our imports. The fact is that, in those areas, the Chancellor never tells us the whole truth when it is convenient for him, particularly with regard to trade exports and imports, because to give a truthful account of our balance of payments record would be to expose the cynicism of the Government's policy. We are facing a consumer-led balance of payments crisis. The Chancellor's response to that is to attempt to buy votes by cutting taxes, as I have not the slightest doubt he will in next year's Budget.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the right hon. Gentleman be more truthful with the House on the matter and agree that one reason for the high level of imports is the lack of quality in British industry? That quality will not be achieved by the prescriptions that he has been putting forward to the British nation over the past two years.

Mr. Hattersley: I do not believe that for a minute. The reason for our record being as bad as I have described is the attack on our manufacturing base, which has been central to the Government's economic policy. More important in that context, the reasons are debatable between us; the facts are not. I only wish that the Chancellor would tell us the facts rather than put the invariable gloss on the truth, which is his stock in trade.

I have no doubt that the Chancellor will deny many of those things when he speaks, so I should like to pause for a moment to evaluate the worth of his denials. On 9 October, on Channel 4 news, he was accused of dodging the issue of exchange rates in his conference speech. I have listened to this with great pleasure several times during the past day. The right hon. Gentleman defended himself by saying that he would deal with the subject in his Mansion house speech in seven days' time. He did not say a word on the subject. However, he dealt with the balance of trade, describing the August trade figures as a freak. What impression did he intend to give by describing them as a freak? Did he mean to suggest that the September figures, about which he must have known something by then—a deficit of £277 million—should be regarded as normal, or was he trying to convey the impression that the balance of trade and the balance of payments were moving into surplus? The truth is that the Chancellor will say anything to get out of a corner. Trapped in a sinking ship, he always throws his integrity overboard, and we hear the splash almost at once.

The Chancellor has similarly played for time with the economy, and he has been rumbled. Capital assets are sold off to finance brief tax reductions. Oil has briefly filled the

hole blown in the economy by the collapse of manufacturing industry and the collapse brought on by the pursuit of the arbitrary medium-term financial strategy targets.

In both cases the Government have taken refuge in the most temporary of expedients, for North sea oil is running out, and every time the markets catch a glimpse of what, on present policies, the British economy will be when the oil has gone, they withdraw their confidence from the British economy. That is because the Chancellor has managed to make us peculiarly dependent on the 6 per cent. of gross domestic product that oil provides. I should think—indeed, I feel certain—that there can be no other industrialised country in the world where the Finance Minister would go to Parliament and offer as one of his excuses for failure the reduction in costs inherent in the reduction in oil prices.

As the Chancellor made clear today, that has become one of the reasons why things are not operating in the way that he would choose. Had he used seven years of oil revenues to build up our industrial base, that reduction would have been an unprecedented boom, but, tragically, we are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in oil revenues because of that dependence, because of the way that the Chancellor has chosen to lean upon them. Because of our tragic dependence, he has made sterling particularly vulnerable to changes in market valuation of our future prospects.

The most desperate example of that was the depreciation of the pound to $1.06 in March 1985. The most recent example was in August this year, when the markets discovered that even with oil we were in massive trade deficit.

The House will recall that the Chancellor told us at the time of the Budget that the reductions that were brought about by the fall in oil prices and oil revenues

"should not cause us undue concern."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 168.]

During the Budget debate the right hon. Gentleman's complacency either rose to new heights or sank to new depths, depending on how complacency is evaluated. He said that, having lost half the value of oil in 25 weeks and survived, we could easily accommodate losing the rest over the next 25 years. I hope that he recalls what has happened since he told us that all was well, that everything was on course, that the economy was moving in the direction that he chose, and that we should not concern ourselves with the change in oil prices. Since then the balance of payments, which at that time was forecast to produce a £5 billion surplus, has moved into deficit. The best that the Chancellor can say about it now is that it will break even, as distinct from the surplus of £5 billion.

Interest rates have gone up again. The Chancellor still shrugs off increases in interest rates—that is, when they are not likely to take place during the Conservative party conference—but as a result of his attitude towards those matters, and as a result of the market's judgment about the economy when the oil runs out and the discovery of our true trade position, and despite the massive intervention in which he was involved in October, the pound still required an increase in interest rates, which inevitably caused enormous damage to investment prospects and enormous hardship to home owners.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): In what way does the right hon. Gentleman think that the policies that he has proposed would have reduced interest rates to the level of those of some of our industrial competitors?

Mr. Hattersley: The straight answer to the question is that the repatriation of funds recently invested overseas will produce an upward pressure on sterling and make it unnecessary to run record interest rates in the way in which the Chancellor has done it.

Having answered the question, let me tell the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*—and his colleagues that we chose this debate so that we could talk about the Government's policy. The Chancellor emphasised that by deciding to make his autumn statement today. Now and in future debates neither the hon. Gentleman nor the Chancellor will run away from the consequences of the past seven years by trying to divert attention to other things.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall not give way.

I was going to mention the intervention in October and say that the Chancellor, having spent seven or eight days encouraging and supporting that proposal and that attitude, was still driven to the increase in interest rates, with enormous damage to the economy, as well as the loss of the funds that were used for intervention. I suppose that it made it possible for the Conservative party to end its conference on a happy note. It made the Prime Minister participate in not only the longest ovation in political history, but the most expensive.

Although the inevitable was postponed for a week or so, the cycle of long-term collapse continued. Interest rates went up, and manufacturing industry was damaged again. That damage meant that the economy went into further decline. It meant an emphasis on, and acceleration and continuation of, the trends since 1979. It meant less investment than in 1979, less output than in 1979, and a further erosion of the manufacturing base on which our economy is so dependent. Inevitably, the result has been another bad balance of payments performance and another sterling crisis, and the whole damaging process is repeated again and again. The only question is how soon the cycle will once again come round.

In a moment or two the Chancellor will, as is his way, reject all the blame, deny every allegation and reject all criticism. However, he will do so with less than complete conviction, because if he really believed in his own innocence he would not spend so much time tampering with the evidence. I offer him the chance to make his defence more plausible than it has been during the last four years. I shall do so by asking him five specific questions about what he has produced, what the medium-term financial strategy, for which he is responsible, has produced and what the Government have produced since 1979.

My first question concerns unemployment. I shall make it as easy as I can for him to answer this question, knowing his pathetic reluctance to answer questions on unemployment. For a moment, I suppose wrongly and irrationally, I overlook the 18 statistical changes that have been introduced to reduce the total of the registered unemployed. I overlook the new tests and targets that have been introduced this week to squeeze unemployed men

[Mr. Hattersley]

and women off the register. I overlook even the special schemes, measures and projects introduced for the same purpose—the artificial jobs which the Prime Minister condemned during the 1979 election campaign. Allowing for all the Government's statistical figures, for all the bullying to take men and women off the register and for the schemes which are not real jobs, will unemployment be down to 3 million at the next general election?

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge) *rose*—

Mr. Hattersley: I am sure the Chancellor will recall that the chairman of the Conservative party said—ironically, on BBC television—that if the Government were unable to bring unemployment down to 3 million by the next election they would not be worth re-electing. Will the Chancellor and his colleagues be worth re-electing on polling day? Even on the Chancellor's phoney figures, will the unemployment figure be 3 million by that date?

Secondly, the labour force has fallen by 1·2 million and 2 million full-time jobs have been lost. When will the number of jobs in the economy be back to its 1979 level? That has nothing to do with the demographic change to which the Prime Minister constantly refers, and nothing to do with the fact that, as the Prime Minister prays in aid, more women are entering the labour market.

Thirdly, when will real interest rates, now about 8 per cent., fall to their 1979 level? From experience, I know that the Chancellor usually claims that high real interest rates are the result of his success. His claim enables us to measure the recklessness with which he replies to such questions. He claims that high real interest rates are the product of low inflation.

If the right hon. Gentleman is going to make that claim today and say that the only reason why real interest rates in this country remain at about 8 per cent., I should like him to answer another question. When will real interest rates in Britain be as low as those in comparable countries where inflation is even lower than ours? I gave the Chancellor a list of the countries with better inflation records than our own, and in most cases their real interest rates are lower than ours. When will we aspire to, let alone achieve, the success of our OECD and EEC competitors in either of those regards?

Fourthly, may we hear more about the August balance of payments "freak"? I agree with the Chancellor that one record catastrophic month proves nothing. That catastrophic month was followed by a bad month. In themselves, two months of pretty grim figures may not prove anything. So, what will the Chancellor tell us about the year from August, the year from that freak figure to next August? Will it be in surplus, or in deficit?

Finally, what are the prospects for manufacturing industry? Since 1979, manufacturing output has fallen by 7·5 per cent., manufacturing investment has fallen by 17 per cent., and the manufacturing balance of trade has shifted from a £4 billion surplus to a £4 billion deficit. Under existing policies, will manufacturing output, investment and trade ever return to the 1979 position?

I have to confess that to a degree each of those questions is rhetorical. Anybody who has listened to the Chancellor in the House, or elsewhere, knows that the chances of his even essaying an honest answer are negligible. In the light of that, I want to ask the Prime Minister a question, in her absence, about what I hope will become her most notorious statement during the general election campaign of 1979.

On 19 April 1979, at an election rally in Birmingham, the Prime Minister promised to cut unemployment and described how that would be achieved. We are, she said, "going to do it by creating the conditions for real jobs, not artificial ones, so that once again the products stream from our factories and workshops whilst the customers of the world scramble over each other to buy them."

The right hon. Lady has done the exact opposite. Unemployment has risen by 2 million, the register has been reduced by artificial jobs and arbitrary disqualifications, factories and workshops have been starved of investment and have gone into liquidation in record numbers and the salesmen of the world fall over themselves to sell their goods in our markets.

It is a big claim, but even the Prime Minister has never made a more cynical promise, nor broken her word more consistently and cynically. I make it absolutely clear that my hon. Friends and I will vote tonight against the cynicism and deception that are an integral part of Tory economic policy, as well as against the Government's obvious failure.

5.28 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the success of its economic policies, which have brought inflation down to its lowest levels for two decades, combined with sustained economic growth, a million new jobs created since 1983, steadily rising living standards, and record levels of investment.'.

The last part of the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was even more extraordinary than usual. He not only claimed that the result of the 1979 election was a foul, but seemed totally oblivious of the fact that the British people had an opportunity in 1983 to record their own verdict, not his verdict, on the Government's economic performance and returned us with an increased majority.

In my statement earlier this afternoon, I set out the prospects for the economy over the next year. It is above all a prospect of yet another year of the steady progress that we have seen over the past five years, with healthy economic growth, inflation at low levels, and 1 million new jobs created since 1983.

Mr. Hattersley: I spoke for 28 minutes and that was not half enough to get the truth out of the Chancellor. He has given us the figure of new jobs since 1983. Will he now give us the figure of job losses since the Government were elected?

Mr. Lawson: I shall make my speech in my own way. It really is no use refighting the 1983 election. The country gave its verdict on our performance between 1979 and 1983. That is over and done with. We are now talking about what has happened since we were re-elected in 1983 and since then there are very nearly 1 million more jobs. That is a fact.

That steady progress is something that we have come to take so much for granted on both sides of the House that it now seems almost routine. The only questions that we ask ourselves are whether growth will be, say, 2·5 per cent. or 3 per cent., or whether inflation will be, say, 3 per cent. or 4 per cent.

Yet, when one thinks about it, this is a pretty remarkable turnround. Not so long ago, we used to debate whether Britain could have sustained growth without a sharp and damaging increase in inflation. The 364 economists were not the only people who said that it was completely impossible. Well, we have put an end to that argument and it is one debate that has been decisively won. It has been won by the Government sticking to their guns. But if ever there was a year in which that has been tested, this is it. The dominant event has clearly been the collapse of the oil price—halving from almost $30 a barrel at the time of last year's autumn statement to around $14 a barrel today.

There were those who would have said, a year ago, that this halving of the oil price would wreak enormous damage to the British economy, and many did so. That is another argument which has been decisively won. Earlier this year, there were some who gambled that pressure on sterling, combined with the loss of our oil revenues, would cause us to abandon the free market policies which have made our North sea oil industry the success it has been. The Opposition, as short sighted as ever — the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) will well remember this—urged us to do so. Yet is there anyone now, at home or abroad, who doubts our resolve to keep the North sea free? I very much doubt it.

What has happened to the United Kingdom economy in a year when we have lost more than half of our oil revenues and half of the value of our oil exports? As I explained earlier this afternoon, public borrowing remains on track, despite the fact that oil revenues this year are set to be no less than £6½ billion lower than last year. Despite that, the PSBR is on track. To have weathered a revenue loss of this magnitude is a remarkable achievement. The reason we have been able to weather it, and the impact of the oil price fall generally, is the underlying strength and resilience of the British economy as a whole, coupled with the prudence of the Government's financial policy.

Domestic demand has been growing steadily, and the forecast for this year as a whole is a rise of 3½ per cent. over last year, with consumer spending particularly strong. Some of the commentators and some Labour Members have woken up to that a bit belatedly and with something of a start.

When I said in May that we were seeing a pause in economic activity but that I expected it to be short, the conventional wisdom, and certainly the view on the Labour Benches, was that the pause was not a pause but a halt, that the economy was underperforming and in danger of grinding to a stop. That was what was said as recently as May this year. Now that the extra spending power to which I pointed then is feeding through into demand, in much the way that I expected, the conventional wisdom on the Labour Benches has changed tack. Suddenly I am told that the economy is overheating—

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Sucking in imports.

Mr. Lawson: —with a consumer boom destined to do nothing but, in the startlingly original words of the hon. Gentleman suck in imports.

As usual the Opposition do not know which horse to back. One moment they tell us that the economy is flat on its back, and the next moment they say that we are engineering an irresponsible pre-election boom. Indeed, the hon. Member for Thurrock has written to me suggesting that I am engineering what she called a "post-election boom"—that is precisely what she wrote. They clearly do not know whether they are coming or going.

I can, of course, fully understand why they are so worried about the next election, whenever that may be. But the plain fact is that demand at home is growing very much as I expected at the time of the Budget, and as I reiterated in May. Indeed, its growth has been remarkably steady.

What has fallen short, it is true, has been this year's growth in exports, largely because of the worldwide slow-down in trade earlier this year, and the cut-back in spending by OPEC and other primary producers. But that has only reduced our overall growth rate this year from about the 3 per cent. that I forecast in the Budget to the 2½ per cent. that I now expect. Looking ahead to next year, there is every reason to expect demand at home to go on rising steadily while our export performance picks up again. The outlook for exports is very encouraging.

Mr. Hattersley: The Chancellor makes a typical point about the fall-off in our exports and world trends. Why have we lost a disproportionate share compared with similar countries?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is, as usual, completely wrong. He is so concerned about manufacturing. The only accurate figures that we have are for manufacturing trade. Manufacturing exports' share of world trade has been steady; if anything, it is rising slightly. It has certainly been steady for the past five years, whereas under the previous Labour Government it was steadily falling, year in, year out. There has been a remarkable change in trade.

As I was saying, the outlook for exports is encouraging. The recent CBI quarterly survey shows that companies themselves are a good deal more optimistic about export prospects than they were earlier in the year. Non-oil exports have resumed a vigorous growth and stand at an all-time high. The right hon. Gentleman once again made much of the difficulties of the manufacturing sector, but just as the fall in exports had a particularly marked impact on manufacturing companies, so the pick-up will be of particular benefit to manufacturers.

The signs are encouraging. In the third quarter of 1986, exports of manufactures were some 3 per cent. higher in real terms than in the first half of the year. World trade in manufactured goods is likely to grow more rapidly in 1987, and I am confident that British exporters will seize the opportunities open to them. Over the past five years, British manufacturing exports have succeeded in maintaining their share of world markets — a success unprecedented in recent history, and in sharp contrast to the marked fall under the previous Government.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*—

Mr. Lawson: I shall give way in a moment.

The competitive position of the non-oil economy has been improved by the necessary adjustment of the exchange rate to the oil price collapse. A continuous fall in the exchange rate would simply mean ever higher inflation, and that is something no one wants, and to which this Government are resolutely opposed.

The plain fact is that the pound is now highly competitive.

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. Gentleman made a number of claims about world trade and our share of it. Will he give the honest accurate figures now, will he ask the Chief Secretary to give them, or shall I give them instead?

Mr. Lawson: The figures for our volume share of world trade are contained in the printed version of the autumn statement and they will show precisely what I said a few moments ago.

I said in my statement earlier today that in the short term the current account of the balance of payments, to which the right hon. Gentleman alluded, is expected to go into a deficit of some £1½ billion next year — after, incidentally, a cumulative surplus of £21 billion over the past six years, compared with a cumulative deficit of about £5 billion under the previous Labour Government.

But we have now had a major improvement in cost competitiveness. As the full benefits feed through, the current account deficit should steadily diminish. Overall, non-oil exports are forecast to rise next year by 5½ per cent., continuing the present strong upward trend. The London Business School is forecasting an even stronger recovery in exports, particularly in manufacturing. This more than offsets some slowdown in consumer spending, while investment continues to rise broadly in line with the economy as a whole.

Looking at the overall position, the prospect for next year is for faster growth that is balanced in two senses: first, between domestic demand and exports; and, secondly, between investment and consumer spending. I have to say that the latter achievement was conspicuously lacking in the upswing that took place under the previous Government. Between 1975 and 1979 under Labour — *[Interruption.]* — I know that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook does not like listening to this, but he will have to. Between 1975 and 1979, under Labour, consumer expenditure grew twice as fast as investment, whereas over the period since 1981 — which is a much longer upswing, incidentally, and one which is still continuing — investment has gone up by an average of over 4 per cent. a year and consumer spending by less than 3 per cent.

Of course there remains deep concern on both sides of the House about the continuing high level of unemployment. The number of jobs has substantially increased — by 1 million since 1983, more than in the rest of the European Community put together. Total employment has now risen for 13 successive quarters — the longest period of uninterupted growth in employment for almost 30 years. Opposition Members ought to welcome that if they have any concern at all for the unemployed, which they have not. They seek to exploit the unemployed for their own party political purposes. They simply do not care.—*[Interruption.]*

Here, too, there are signs that the outlook is more promising. Last month's figures show unemployment at the same level as six months previously, and the highest number of registered job vacancies for seven years. But the key to continuing and accelerating the growth in the number of jobs is a more efficient and competitive economy. Next year's faster growth means that the outlook for jobs should be more promising, provided always that pay settlements are at a level that can be afforded.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spent a long time talking about the decline of the manufacturing sector. The picture, inevitably, is not nearly as uniform as he implied: in certain industries, mostly the metal-using industries, output certainly is still below the pre-recession peak. But in others, such as chemicals, food, and electrical engineering, it is well above the levels of 1979.

I do not, of course, dispute that manufacturing output altogether has fallen slightly under this Government, just as it did when Labour was in office. Indeed, given the forecast of 4 per cent. growth in manufacturing output for next year, the overall fall under this Government will be, if anything, less than under Labour. But there is this critical difference: manufacturing productivity has grown almost three times as fast since 1979 as it did under Labour. Partly as a result, manufacturing profitability is at its highest level since 1973.

Nor, of course, is it right to overlook the non-manufacturing side of the economy — which, after all, accounts for some three quarters of total national output. In looking at the overall picture, it is interesting to compare the six years from 1973 to 1979, dominated by the Labour Government, with the period since, when we have been in office. Overall output growth has been similar, though slightly higher since 1979, up by an average of 1½ per cent. a year compared with 1¼ per cent. a year under Labour. But what is significant is that most of the growth under Labour was simply attributable to North sea oil. Excluding oil, output went up by an average of only ½ per cent. a year between 1973 and 1979 compared with 1¾ per cent. a year since.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Why use the 1973 figure?

Mr. Lawson: That was the last year before the Labour Government took office. That was the base. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook asked me about the comparison between inflation in this country and inflation in the Community as a whole. During the entire period of the Labour Government, inflation in Britain averaged 4½ per cent. more than inflation in the Community as a whole. Throughout the time that we have been in office, inflation has averaged the same as in the Community as a whole and, indeed, is now below it. Not only has our absolute performance on inflation improved but so has our relative performance.

Mr. Hattersley: I am fascinated once more by the right hon. Gentleman's technique. Having chided me for constantly choosing periods going back beyond 1983, why has he suddenly started to make statistical comparisons with periods going back to 1979 and 1974? Is he not doing what he always does — just choosing whatever arbitrary period produces a bogus figure?

Mr. Lawson: That year is the obvious base. As the Labour Government came into office in March 1974, they inherited the 1973 position. The right hon. Gentleman also suggested that we had now abandoned both fiscal and monetary policies. I explained to the House earlier today that fiscal policy remains firmly on track in spite of the £6½ billion fall in oil revenues compared with last year. We have achieved a continuing reduction in public expenditure as a percentage of GDP, whether or not the proceeds of privatisation are included, and at the same time made prudent increases in spending in certain priority areas.

As for monetary policy, I never really expected the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to understand the complexity of operating it, a skill which would anyway be quite pointless for him to try to acquire since, fortunately for the nation, he will never be required to discharge that responsibility.

There is absolutely no change in this Government's view that the key to controlling inflation is monetary policy, and the key instrument of monetary policy is short-term interest rates. That policy is delivering the goods.

I accept the fact to which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred, that interest rates here are higher than in other major industrial countries. There are a number of reasons for that, including the high level of pay settlements, and the premium needed to cover the market's fear of a Labour Government—however unlikely that may be. But, as I explained in my Mansion house speech, my objective has to be to keep short-term interest rates, on average, at whatever level is necessary to achieve the overriding aim of securing monetary conditions that bear down on inflation.

The trouble with the Opposition parties is that they cannot make up their mind whether they are coming or going. They want to argue both that monetary policy is too loose and that interest rates are too high. They say openly that they would borrow a great deal more and then they say that they would get their interest rates down. They do not know whether they are coming or going or which way to turn.

Opposition Members are always keen to demonstrate their compassion for the needy in society but the rampant inflation that their policies created——

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South) *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: I am afraid that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has taken up the time for interventions.

Opposition Members are always keen to demonstrate their compassion for the needy in society, but the rampant inflation which their policies created left millions of people watching helplessly as the value of a lifetime's savings was eroded. Inflation does not create jobs; it destroys them.

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: We have brought inflation down to the lowest levels seen for a generation. We have brought public borrowing under control and are gradually reducing the ratio of public spending to national output, even without taking acccount of privatisation proceeds. But within this overall constraint, and thanks in part to the attention——

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) must have seen that the Chancellor clearly does not intend to give way to him.

Mr. Lawson: But even within that overall constraint, and thanks in part to the attention we have paid to improving efficiency and value for money, we have been able to improve public services in priority areas such as education, health, law and order, and housing. The plans that I announced today will bring a further reduction in the ratio of public spending to gross domestic product, and further improvements in priority areas. In a moment I will compare that to the performance of the last Labour Government.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): What the right hon. Gentleman has just said is very important. Right from the beginning of monetary policy it was the monetary aggregates that were the key to the reduction of inflation. Today, he has announced that the prime instruments that he will make use of in reducing inflation are interest rates. Therefore, there has been a switch from monetarism to the old standby of reducing activity and so reducing inflation by the use of high interest rates. It is the old, old story. The right hon. Gentleman has changed completely.

Mr. Lawson: I recommend that the right hon. Gentleman should read my speech to the Lombard Association in April, when I set this out at great length. Given that he was once a Treasury Minister, I am astonished that he makes no connection between the demand for money and the level of interest rates. One relates to price, and the other to supply and demand.

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: I have just given way.

Let us contrast the record of this Government with that of the last Labour Government. They spent money all right—13 per cent. more on public expenditure in real terms in 1974-75 than in 1973-74—and they increased public borrowing eventually to more than 9 per cent. of GDP. But far from leading to the Socialist nirvana that they were expecting, it led them simply to the international equivalent of the bankruptcy court and a lesson in O-level economics from the IMF. Spending then had to be cut, and they cut it in very damaging ways that we have had to make good.

The Opposition's motion accuses us of cuts in public sector capital spending. That is rich. We have kept capital spending roughly the same in real terms. It was Labour who cut it—by 20 per cent. in real terms. And look at Labour's priorities. During their whole time in office, capital spending on the Health Service fell by 30 per cent. in real terms, and with the plans that I have announced today we will have increased it by 30 per cent. in real terms.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: No, I shall not give way.

Spending on motorways and trunk roads — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members do not like to listen to this, but they will have to. Spending on motorways and trunk roads also fell by 30 per cent. in real terms under Labour. Today's announcement means that it will be nearly 30 per cent. higher in real terms in 1987-88 than in 1978-79.

I will admit to cutting the cost of building roads. In real terms the public now gets six miles of roads for the price of five compared with the time that we took office. Given the differences between our record and that of Labour, it is nothing short of an impertinence for the Opposition motion to accuse us of cuts and for the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to say, as he did in a recent speech, that a Labour investment programme would ensure that

"essential and long neglected services — roads, houses, hospitals, schools—are at last funded."

Labour cut those services by 30 per cent. in real terms and by 20 per cent. overall.

Therefore, I am more than happy to compare and contrast our record in office with that of the Labour Government. However, unlike the right hon. Member for

[Mr. Lawson]

Sparkbrook, it is not my habit to dwell on the past for too long. He has given us a few glimpses of how he would manage the economy if ever he were to be given the chance. From his recent pronouncements, some people might think that he was a reformed character. According to one of his recent statements,

"We were, and we remain, determined to promise no more than the nation can afford . . . Of course, the easiest way to reduce the ratio of debt to GDP is to allow inflation to rise".

That is what he said, and he should know, because that is what Labour did when in office, and that is what it would do if it were to get into office again. The right hon. Gentleman also said:

"Working within that firm financial framework, the next Labour Government will have to operate a system of strict policy priorities".

Where have I heard the words "firm financial framework" before? In part these plagiarised sentiments are aimed at the voters because the right hon. Gentleman knows that they rejected Labour's profligate approach in 1979 and 1983.

In part they are no doubt aimed at the financial markets. But most of all they are aimed at the right hon. Gentleman's own colleagues, sitting with him on the Opposition Front Bench — not today, because they cannot wait to get away — who have been so ready to promise the earth and think about how to pay for it later. For example, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is on record as saying:

"I am sure that it's not important to cost everything in detail."

That is the sort of remark that we normally associate with his hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

We have some sympathy with the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, given his difficulties with his colleagues, but the trouble is that he is far too late because the country and the financial markets have already heard enough to understand what another Labour Government would be like. The answer is that they would be exactly like the Government we had before—back to the disaster of the 1970s, with massive Government spending increases.

To try to get some rigour into the debate—which I thought the right hon. Gentleman would welcome—my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary had a costing done of the Opposition's pledges, and they amounted to a total of £28 billion. For months and months the right hon. Gentleman has had no answer to that. The Opposition have a non-answer, and try to pray in aid the Institute for Fiscal Studies, but the right hon. Gentleman's "only" model of reassurance is that the first year cost would be only £10 billion—as if that were not more than enough. At least he admits to that, even though on his own dubious arithmetic it would be another £4 billion or so on taxes and roughly twice as much borrowing as we have now.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): And unemployment down.

Mr. Lawson: How ignorant can one get to imagine that that would lead to a reduction in unemployment. When Labour went on its spending spree, unemployment doubled.

But only the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook could believe that the first year is all that matters. We elect Governments for a whole Parliament, and what happens during the whole of that Parliament is what matters. If Labour were ever to be elected, which pledges would it fulfil? If some are to be deferred, what would they be? The House and the country have a right to know.

I have today published this Government's expenditure plans for the next three years, and the House knows, that they are backed by detailed costings, properly worked out. We have a right to ask the Opposition what alternatives they are putting forward. Which pledges would be met and which would not? I shall gladly give way now for an answer.

Mr. Prescott: We shall certainly answer the right hon. Gentleman's challenge about the use of public expenditure. We can get people back to work, and one example that we shall carry out is the commitment to return to Labour's previous housing programme when 2,000 houses a week more were built than during the period of this Government.

Mr. Lawson: Clearly I should not have given way, because that is no answer to my question. I therefore ask it again, so that there will be time to answer it in the reply. In his letter, the Chief Secretary listed a number of specific Labour pledges. I ask a simple question: which of those pledges will be deferred and which will not?

Mr. Prescott *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is too late.

It is idle to pretend that Labour's pledges could be funded simply by increasing taxes on the better off. Even the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has come to realise that, because after vainly trying to maintain that taxes would go up only for the top 5 per cent. of the population, he admitted defeat and said that the point above which people would have to pay more would be

"a jagged, or broken, line".

The right hon. Gentleman has a jagged and broken policy, and the overwhelming majority of the population would have to pay more taxes if he were ever to come into office.

In any case, the right hon. Gentleman's attempt to raise taxes for the top 5 per cent. would be most unlikely to raise anything like the £3½ billion which he claims it would. All the evidence suggests that extremely high tax rates reduce rather than increase the amount of revenue raised, and that lower top tax rates bring in more, not less, revenue. That is precisely what has happened. The top 5 per cent. of taxpayers now pay 27 per cent. of total income tax revenue, which is a higher proportion than they ever paid under the Labour Government.

Throughout the world, countries such as India, Australia and New Zealand as well as France, Germany and the United States are realising that and are reducing their rates of tax. It is only the Opposition in this House who are out of step. It is clear that either some of Labour's pledges would have to be deferred, in which case we had better hear which ones, or that the tax burden would have to go up for everybody, or, more probably, both.

Perhaps that is why the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition stepped in last week with his own new suggestion for raising money. He has pledged Labour to what he euphemistically refers to as a "revision" of mortgage interest tax relief. No doubt the 8 million people who currently benefit from it will draw their own conclusions.

Our economic policy has delivered low inflation, sustained growth, and a million new jobs since 1983. That

is the way forward. The Opposition offer polices which the electorate rejected decisively in 1979 and decisively again in 1983, and which the people of this country will reject again when, in the fullness of time, they are given the opportunity to do so.

6.1 pm

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech included some enjoyable debating points against the Opposition, it must have a high claim to qualify as one of the most complacent that I have ever heard from him or from anybody else in the House.

The right hon. Gentleman can at least be regarded as relatively lucky in the sense that this debate takes place today, not a few weeks ago when he was more manifestly up against the ropes. Indeed, I suspect that he will be so again in only a few weeks' time. It is perhaps not a great tribute to the Opposition's sense of timing that they fixed this debate today. Of much more significance is the fact that his respite is short-term, whereas the faults of the Government's management are deep-seated and long-term.

I deliberately used the word "management" rather than "policy" because it is now almost impossible to tell what the Government's economic policy is. Insofar as it exists, it is in a state of complete confusion. In the early days of the Government, the policy used to be clear, perhaps too clear. It was also wrong. It was obsessively monetarist—there is certainly room for monetary policy in the management of the economy—and it sought to keep sterling M3 within a steadily declining range.

Sterling M3 is now growing at about 18 per cent., so the Governor of the Bank of England was encouraged recently to say that it was an unreliable indicator which should be and probably would be abandoned. There goes the old centrepiece of the Government's policy. There is a new form of Luddism—if one does not like the reading on an instrument, one destroys it and picks up another instrument in its place.

Mr. Lawson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jenkins: I have hardly started, but yes.

Mr. Lawson: I set out at considerable length and clearly the Government's monetary and fiscal policy in a speech which I gave to the Lombard Association in April this year. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will read it before he says that there is nothing clear about the Government's policy. Meanwhile, perhaps he would care to tell the House what his policy is.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes, I have read the right hon. Gentleman's speech to the Lombard Association. In the immortal words Ernest Bevin used when he was asked by Molotov through an interpreter whether he had studied Marx in the commentary of Hilferding,

"You can tell Mr. Molotov that I 'ave read 'Ilferding and I found him tedious."

That is the position.

Whatever else the right hon. Gentleman did in his Lombard Association speech, he certainly did not clarify the Government's monetary policy. Nearly every independent commentator in this country and elsewhere has been even more muddled about the Government's policy since then than they were previously. The idea that he made everything clear then is absolute nonsense. I shall tell him some of the policies that I would pursue, but I shall tell him, as he would do, in my own order, not his.

What other instrument will be put in place instead of this rejected sterling M3 which was such a centrepiece of Government policy? Will it be ML, or MO as it is sometimes called? That seems to be somewhat in favour again—although the Chancellor was not keen on it in his Budget speech—because at present it is giving the right result. Certainly the Bank of England, as is well known, thinks that it is virtually useless as an indicator. It is mostly notes and coins and says practically nothing about the future. It merely gives some indication of some aspects of the present. But as inflation picks up, as it certainly will somewhat, the indicator will also probably start misbehaving in its turn. What will the Government do then? Will they have another Luddite bash at MO and turn to something else? In that way, ML or MO will join sterling M3 in the category of not being "one of us"—not being reliable in its performance.

I hope that the Chancellor, whose manners are absolutely extraordinary and who could not come to listen to the beginning of the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), will at least have the courtesy to listen to some of the speech of an ex-Chancellor. I have a good deal to say before I sit down and it would help him to listen to it.

If sooner or later all the monetary aggregates prove to be unreliable, there will be no alternative to an exchange rate target as a sheet anchor. That is a perfectly good alternative. We cannot have interest rates just stated like that. What is the Government's target? What are we working on? They say that we are working on interest rates. Interest rates can be a mechanism, but they do not tell one how to use the mechanism. If one abandons monetary aggregates because they do not work or work unreliably, one must have something to put in their place and an exchange rate target is the only effective alternative.

First, the Chancellor has declined to define an exchange rate target and, secondly, it cannot be said that his recent interest rate decisions have been coherently aimed at an exchange rate target. If they have been aimed at anything, as opposed to being merely a reluctant, inevitable reaction to circumstances, they have been aimed at political targets, especially the Conservative party conference.

Thirdly, to try to base a policy on a secret exchange rate target—it has never been published—which is incompetently aimed at, while rejecting the support of the European monetary system direction finder, is perversity beyond the bounds of acceptable eccentricity.

We know or think we know that the Chancellor, together with the Bank of England and the Foreign Office, would prefer to be fully in the EMS, but they have all been overruled by the Prime Minister. That says a good deal about the Chancellor's lack of authority within the Government, to which I shall return later.

First, I shall deal with the substance of what is, after all, Government policy, even if the Chancellor does not agree with it. Several years ago, looking at the wreckage caused by largely irrational currency fluctuations, I formed and advocated the view that the way to get some necessary stability back was to construct a tripod of the dollar, the yen and the ecu, with sterling coming fully into the European monetary system mechanism, and with the authorities of those currencies or groupings accepting

[Mr. Jenkins]

responsibility for keeping them in a reasonable relationship with each other. A full return to Bretton Woods would be a bridge too far in present circumstances. That tripod seems to be both practical and desirable.

Without fanfares — they do not matter — to a substantial extent that has now occurred. The authorities of the three major currencies are accepting that responsibility and are keeping the three in a reasonable relationship with each other. However, there is one important exception. Sterling has not adhered and is outside the triangle. It is the only even medium-sized currency to be on its own.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The right hon. Gentleman has enormous experience and was one of the founding fathers of the EMS. He talks about the yen, the dollar and the ecu. Surely he means the yen, the dollar and the deutschmark. The ecu is not a currency but an expression of an indexed unit, the use of which arises only because the European currencies are so volatile that it pays some countries to use ecus. Surely he means the deutschmark.

Mr. Jenkins: I mean the ecu. The right hon. Gentleman has also studied these matters carefully and constructively so he must know that the ecu is increasingly used in private transactions throughout the world. He should not, therefore, dismiss it as a figment. It is extensively used in private and bank transactions.

Let us not worry too much about the nomenclature, but let us consider the tripod with three legs. One of those legs must be a European leg and so long as sterling is outside that leg is hobbled. That is a disadvantage to us and the other countries, not so much because of the importance of sterling, but because of the importance of London as a financial centre.

Beyond that, and looking at the matter from British self-interest, the wider interest is of considerable importance. If I were to choose one significant currency in the world which was least suited to steam off on its own across a tumultous ocean, rejecting the company of any convoy, it would be sterling. That is the perversity of the Prime Minister's choice. It is not only a hazardous choice but it is a ludicrous choice. It would be splendid only if we genuinely rejected all support from others. But do we?

Three weeks ago we were cap in hand to the Bundesbank. The future of the pound now depends very much upon OPEC and its decisions. Only the sheikhs may cut production and send oil up to $18 or $20 per barrel and only they stand between the Government and the total collapse of their policies.

The Prime Minister's attitude to the EMS is, in a financial context, a repeat of the old song that Britain is not as other countries are and that Britain must always remain somewhat outside. In a political context that has been the constant accompaniment to our national decline over the past 35 years.

I come back to the Chancellor. Why is his reputation so low this autumn? The Government, I regret to say, are not doing badly with public opinion according to the indications. But not the Chancellor. He made a technically good speech at the Conservative party conference. That speech contained part of the clue. It was not a Chancellor's speech. It was a success because it told the audience exactly what it wanted to hear, with not a single uncomfortable message.

By the time of the Mansion house speech, the Chancellor seemed to have lost both his new speech writer and anything to say. Perhaps that was because his exchange rate policy had been vetoed by the Prime Minister. As one commentator put it, he stood up and said, "I haven't got a monetary policy, but trust the Chancellor." But the people do not trust the Chancellor. The City does not trust the Chancellor. For the Chancellor to try to found a policy on trust is like the Prime Minister trying to found a policy on humility.

A Chancellor who is so easily vetoed by the Prime Minister on his direct responsibility—the exchange rate policy — is not up to his job. Under the manifold pressure of modern government, the Chancellor is effective only if he is almost as necessary to the Prime Minister as he or she is to him. By contrast, the present Chancellor could be bundled into a political dustbin without a squeak of protest from the voters, the City or even the Conservative party. The right hon. Gentleman is not a Chancellor. He is a mannikin with a thick coating of bombast.

The Chancellor's weakness, the monetary muddle, the exchange rate confusion, would not matter greatly if underlying factors—the real economy—were sound. But are they? Let us start with the Government's strong point —the jewel in the crown, if there is one—inflation. It is down, but it is the highest, somewhat, of any country supporting a major currency. We are one of the five which support major currencies. Whatever else that suggests, it hardly suggests a unique achievement. It is likely to return to an upward trend.

The combined efforts of Government policy since 1979 have been not to improve but substantially to worsen our competitive position. We have gone from a huge manufacturing surplus of £5·5 billion in 1980 to a 1986 third quarter deficit of £8 billion a year. I do not think that that will be repeated in forthcoming quarters. I certainly hope that it will not. It is the road to disaster.

Even with oil production continuing for some time, the current account has gone from a £3 billion surplus to a deficit predicted by the Chancellor of £1·5 billion. The deficit might be even worse. That is not surprising, as the stock of capital equipment in manufacturing industry is lower than it was seven years ago. In addition, we have the Chancellor's complacency and the stark words of the Government's submission to the European regional development fund which states:

"In the present difficult economic climate, investment in directly productive industry is at a low level."

I take it that in an official document the Government were telling the truth and not deceiving the ERDF to get more money.

Sadly, the Government's great contribution, having refused to stimulate the economy by more respectable means, is a roaring consumer boom, which there is not the slightest chance of their moderating before an election. A roaring consumer boom does not, to any significant extent, mean more employment. In our competitive position, worsening under the Government, it means overwhelmingly higher imports, a still worse balance of payments position and a classic path to perdition.

To have produced, after seven and a half years, the combination of total monetary muddle, a worsened

competitive position, a widespread doubt in other countries as to how we are to pay our way in the future, a desperately vulnerable currency and the prospect of an unending plateau of the highest unemployment in a major country in the industrialised world is a unique achievement over which the Chancellor is an appropriate deputy acting presiding officer.

6.20 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): I agree with what the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) said at the beginning of his speech. However much good news there may be, this is no moment for complacency. However much good news there is, there is one piece of consistently bad economic news, and that is the present, high and tragic rate of unemployment. It is excellent that the United Kingdom's employment rate is the highest of the major European Community countries. It is excellent, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer pointed out, that new jobs are up by 1 million since 1983. Incidentally, how good it was to hear him speaking with such confidence and style. Even so, the highest priority of any Government should and must be stabilisation of the unemployment rate and its reduction.

The international context is hardly encouraging. As the most recent Bank of England paper says, "The world economy pauses". The immediate reality is that the United Kingdom is experiencing a disappointing year to date economically. Exports have stopped growing, fixed investment shows little growth, industrial production is hardly buoyant and a rise in consumption, as the right hon. Member for Hillhead said, owes too much to heavy consumer borrowing and increases in incomes for comfort, although, broadly speaking, we are a low-wage economy.

The question is: what is to be done? I make no secret of my views. I wish to see our country pursue an expansionist cause and mount a more convincing and imaginative attack on both unemployment and low wages. Any such advocate is usually told that that is a policy that would put the fight against inflation at risk. I would answer, "Poppycock." In the first place, I am and I always have been a supporter of the Government's medium-term financial strategy — that is sound money. The Government have never been fully committed to monetarism, as the Select Committee on the Treasury stated in its third report, published in February 1981. The Government have never had the courage of what their enemies call their conviction. If there is an author of monetarist policies in the United Kingdom, it is the right hon. Member for Hillhead.

There is no conflict there, and in any case, I care more about people than for any economic theory, for experience disproves them all, in greater or lesser degree, sooner or later.

I have two recommendations for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, both of which are in tune with what I understand Government policy to be. I introduce them by putting a question. Why are the Government so half-hearted about so much that they do? For instance, why are they so unsuccessful in the control of state expenditure? Every year, the all-party Select Committee on Public Accounts, whose distinguished Chairman is here now, reports numerous examples of failure adequately to control expenditure. It is obvious that by comparison with private industry, financial controls in Government are wholly inadequate.

For example, the Rayner exercise rose like a rocket when it first started. Like a rocket, it excited a moment or two's attention, but it and its lessons are now locked away in an anonymous bottom drawer. The reality is that the scope for huge savings in domestic public expenditure in the budget total is largely unexploited. In my view, for what it is worth, it runs into billions of pounds.

As to overseas expenditure, the European Community sucks up cash like a sponge. Our net contribution since 1973 is no less than £7·5 billion. The lack of will on the part of member Governments to exercise a proper discipline over community expenditure is nothing short of pathetic.

The determination to effect a proper economy in the expenditure of taxpayers' money should be a success story for the Government, for everyone is a taxpayer and therefore everyone must be in favour of careful spending. However — here is the paradox that one saw when the Chancellor was making his autumn statement — my colleagues are defensive about their policies in the face of the crescendo of whining complaint about economies that is our daily experience.

It is high time that we changed gear. As the Institute of Directors pointed out in a recent admirable paper, research by the World Bank shows a clear connection between low public spending, low taxes and high growth, including employment growth. However, in the United Kingdom, the total tax burden is higher than it was in 1979, when the Government took office, and that is a shameful fact. We have a succession of public and semi-public arguments and agonisings of one sort or another, year after year, over the Government's public expenditure plans. Always, the end result is the same — total expenditure exceeds expectations, but the public has an unshakeable belief that every part of expenditure has suffered substantial, some would say uncaring, cuts. That is political brilliance — getting the worst of every possible world.

It need not be so. I recommend two priorities to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, which would change the situation dramatically and for the better. On the first, I agree totally with the right hon. Members for Hillhead and for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). It is essential that we give top priority to helping manufacturing industry. The Government set the climate in which industry works and in some respects, they have done extraordinarily well. For instance, a few years ago we were, as the House knows, a strike-prone society. Happily we are now largely a strike-free society, and that is something for which we can be deeply thankful. In other respects, the Government are doing carelessly badly.

Mr. Prescott: In the interests of truth, are not the facts that in the period of this Government, we have lost more working days in disputes than we did in a similar period of Labour office?

Sir Edward du Cann: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, the events of the winter of discontent, for example, are freshly in the memories of us all to give the contradiction to what he is now claiming. The Government create the climate, and in the field of industrial relations, the legislation introduced over the past half dozen years has been a positive force for good. In other respects we have acted carelessly and, I think, badly. I shall give two examples of what must be done. First, we in government could do a great deal to reduce

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costs for industry. We allow too many costs to be continuously too high. For instance, electricity costs in the United Kingdom are higher than those in most competitor countries. That cannot be right. Interest rates are an enormous burden, especially on smaller businesses.

Apart from costs — no doubt other right hon. and hon. Members can give their own examples — there is the subject of training. Whenever I visit schools or universities, I remain immensely depressed at the unworldliness of academics' approach to life as it really is. There is too much theory and far too little practical interest is taken in subjects, such as mathematics, science, and so on. Manufacturing still represents over 50 per cent. of our exports. Remarkable though the development of small firms has been, they depend on the bigger firms and their prosperity. They are all interdependent.

What I am trying to say to the Government is this: the figures cited by the hon. Member for Hillhead about the decline of manufacturing industry were correct. We should all be deeply worried at present trends. The best thing that we can do is find a multitude of practical ways of ensuring that the burdens on industry are reduced so that it can compete more effectively in world markets.

Second, we must achieve massive tax cuts if we are to have a new prosperity. We need a strategy and we need targets to which we are determined to adhere. We must reject the direction in which, it seems to me, the European Community is moving. It seems to be careless about tax matters, and often it seems ready to consume money in unlimited quantities. By way of contrast, tax reduction and tax reform in the United States have created 9 million new jobs since 1981. Henceforward, the top brackets will be as low as 18 and 28 per cent. The highest rate is lower than the United Kingdom's standard rate.

The United Kingdom's tax and benefits system is quite chaotic. The biggest business in our economy is the transfer industry — Government taking money out of one private pocket and putting it into another. After all that activity, over half the population is in the same position, broadly speaking, after paying taxes and receiving benefits, as it was before. So the transfer industry is the most inefficient business in the country, if not in the world. It is certainly the most expensive.

National Health Service costs are approaching the huge sum of £20 billion a year. Yet, as we all know and complain, quite rightly, the percentage of the gross national product spent in the United Kingdom on health care is lower than that spent in the United States, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Denmark and Norway. The transfer industry is the area to attack, and hard.

I have argued many times in this Chamber for a massive increase in capital expenditure to provide new schools, hospitals, prisons, and so on. A boost for the construction industry would be a terrific boost for employment. It could be achieved almost overnight if as many of those desirable projects as possible were turned over to the private sector.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Although it is right to call for increases in capital expenditure, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the building supply industry has reduced its capacity as a consequence of the Government's policy? So even the best intentions will be delayed before they can be implemented.

Sir Edward du Cann: The hon. Gentleman is right. There is always a time lag. That is all the more reason for starting immediately. Many of those desirable projects to build new schools and hospitals should be turned over wholly to the private sector. If that were done, Government expenditure would reduce and, therefore, the Budget total would reduce. The state would acquire a massive accretion of capital assets financed through rental payments after only a few years. There would be as much, if not more, scope for tax reductions as ever have been derived from asset sales.

I argue for setting free the builders, the hospital administrators, the local education authorities and the Home Office — free from the constraints of financial limits, free from capital allocations, and so on, and free from the whole administrative infrastructure that goes with them. Let us say yes to new projects on a massive scale. Following that, the scope for tax reduction is assured.

I believe that my right hon. Friend has a brilliant opportunity in his next Budget. I pray that he takes it with courage and imagination. It was disappointing to hear nothing in today's statement about either the control of Government expenditure or potential tax reductions. We have heard great boasts outside this Chamber about privatisation. A further dose of privatisation in the way I suggest would undoubtedly enable him to both reduce Government expenditure and substantially reduce taxation. I am impatient to see him do so. I think that the mood of the country is sympathetic to the idea generally. The foundation is laid. In my view, we should literally build on it.

6.35 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) was quite right to draw attention to the problems of manufacturing industry under the Government when many of our exports depend on manufacturing industry. It may well be that the Government, who have not paid much attention to manufacturing industry and are faced with a balance of payments deficit for the first time — that is a notable change in the past seven years — will begin to accord to manufacturing industry some of the assistance that was given to it in the past.

I echo the comments made by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) and express my regret at the early departure of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The motion before us condemns his actions. We should express our dissatisfaction at the fact that he left the Chamber when the right hon. Member for Hillhead had hardly begun his speech. I hope that that message will be passed on to him. In his Budget statement this year, when dealing with oil and oil revenues, the Chancellor said:

> "Inevitably, we suffer a decline, too, in the value of our net oil exports. But the oil price fall will be beneficial for the industrialised world as a whole. Even for the United Kingdom, what we gain on the swings should, over time, more than offset what we lose on the roundabouts." — [*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c.168.]

I find that statement impossible to understand. It seems to me as egregious nonsense as one can utter on such an important matter. What the Chancellor could have done with oil revenues was to add them to the national income and export benefits that we get, so that we would end up with a higher gross national product. That would have been of advantage to us if it had been used properly.

I call in aid the Morgan Grenfell economic review, which, happily, I found on my desk this morning. It was a useful review, pointing out the advantages that we have had from oil exports and showing the effect of the decline in the price of oil on certain other countries — from Japan, Italy and Germany, which have benefited enormously from the drop in the price of oil, to ourselves, who have lost considerably. It is a clear picture. Our industrial competitors benefited largely, and we lost considerably.

In a number of respects, we must consider oil as a commodity that is not much different from other commodities. If we happened, as a country, to be a big grain producer, such as France or the United States, our interest would lie in a high world price for wheat and maize. If we were a coffee-producing country, such as Brazil, our interest would lie in a high world price for coffee. If we were big potato farmers, we would be happy for a high world price for potatoes.

Similarly, we should be able to recognise our own interests staring us in the face and rejoice in a high world price for oil. Unfortunately, we have not been able to gain the benefits that would accrue from that, but if we want to do so we must act. Both the two forms of action that I have suggested are necessary but unfortunately inimical to the present dogma of the Conservative party.

First, it is necessary to hold talks with OPEC. I am not saying that we should become members of OPEC if it is unwise enough to change the rules of membership, but we can talk and — what is harder for this Administration — listen.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer prides himself on the fact that we have the freest oil province in the world. He said that in his Budget statement this year. Why should we pride ourselves on that? Why should we be less interventionist than the United States or Canada? Why is it thought that we have something to be proud about? I would sooner pride ourselves on the fact that the oil industry is working for the benefit of the entire country and for its future. The level of the output of oil should not be left to companies which may have no involvement in the future industrial performance of Britain. It should be determined by the interest to our country in maximising our resources and the prosperity of Britain as a whole.

Secondly, I would wish to relieve industry, and possibly consumers, of the effects of higher oil prices. For a start, we could reduce oil taxation. That is an easy action to take and a welcome one, and it would provide an offset against higher oil prices. Interest rates also need to be reduced, for reasons that we have heard, and they could be reduced still further as higher oil prices strengthened the pound. Important also is the fact that there could be a trade-off between the benefits to the Exchequer from the higher oil price and the passing on of some of those benefits to our hard-pressed industry.

Genuine investment incentives might be considered. I grant that the best expenditure is made when the manufacturer decides that particular investment is required irrespective of the help that a Government may give but do not let us scorn the investment that comes when a Government are involved. After all, every successful nation practises that form of investment, and so should we. The trouble is that we are not very good at it. We are not very good at merging the interests of the Government and industry. It is a grievous fault that we possess; a fault which other countries do not have to anything like the same extent, and one that we should be busying ourselves in putting right. We should not be adopting the hands-off attitude that is so common now.

I turn to what I call sterling M3 and other good luck charms. I, like a few of my hon. Friends, have a copy of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1980-81. It is a treasured copy. It is signed by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who happens to be the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. It set out in detailed form how we would obtain all the successes arising from the control of monetary stock. It shows how the money supply was to be connected directly to the reducing of inflation, from 7 to 11 per cent. in 1980-81, down to 4 to 8 per cent. in 1983-84. In fact, it was 10 per cent. during that period. Undeterred in 1985, the Financial Statement and Budget report brought forward by the Chancellor of the Exchequer rearranged the timetable to bring the range down to 2 to 5 per cent. in 1988-89.

We have seen the level of inflation reduce to 2·5 per cent., and the latest money supply figure of September 1986 is 18·3 per cent. If there is any connection between the sort of monetarism practised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the reduction of inflation, it is contradicted by the statistics on which the right hon. Gentleman set the monetary targets in 1980. I know that economic targets are not easy to achieve, but a Government who put the fullest possible trust in an economic objective and failed so signally deserve a special page, possibly, in "Guinness Book of Records".

As the right hon. Member for Hillhead said, the Governor of the Bank of England finds himself completely bemused. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, as is his wont when he is challenged, said today that monetary indicators are very important, but no one really believes that he pays much attention to them. We heard today, more clearly than in any speech that the right hon. Gentleman has made previously, that interest rates are much more important than he has ever allowed for in the past. Interest rates interact with the level of exchange rates, as the hon. Member for Hillhead said, but it is only an interaction. If we were to find that it required too high a level of interest rates to achieve the exchange rate that we want, there would have to be a modification. The prime factor is likely to be the exchange rate, but it is influenced by the level of interest rates and the level of economic activity.

Gone out of the window is any attempt to continue with the sort of monetarism that has been preached, but because it was preached it tends to be reaffirmed in some way each time the Chancellor of the Exchequer deals with these matters. We know what the reality is, however.

Very high interest rates have been disastrous for manufacturing industry, as well as the high pound. There was always some sort of a case to squeeze the home market and make the export market more attractive to industry by a combination of high interest rates and low exchange rates. That was the de Gaulle solution in 1958. There is a case to be made also for encouraging the home market to achieve economies of scale, and that was the basis of Maudling's dash for growth. No case can be made, however, for a simultaneous squeeze on export markets and home markets by high exchange rates and high interest rates. We have clearing bank base rates of 11 per cent., which means interest rates of 13 per cent. or more for good-class borrowers. That means that in real terms they are paying over 10 per cent., which is historically high. As for the poor, wretched new companies which get all the

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

crocodile tears from the Government — these are companies which have not established themselves — they are faced with interest rates of 12 or 13 per cent. It is extremely difficult to establish a company on that basis.

In these circumstances, the only gainers are the financial intermediaries. The City booms, in direct contrast to the decline of manufacturing industry. The wretched aspect is that the House is divided, not into political parties, but in the types of constituency that we represent. There are rundown manufacturing towns and there is the affluence that is provided by the City of London and dispersed in an area around it, where those engaged in the City live and work.

In March 1986, 9·6 per cent. of all employees were employed in the financial sector. Is this a wise division of our resources in the present harsh economic climate? We are grateful, of course, for any jobs, but in the long term should the building societies, banks, insurance companies and unit trusts — all the financial intermediaries which take our money and place it elsewhere — have such a dominant role in our economy? I remind the House that 60 years ago Sir Winston Churchill eyed the City of London and compared it with industry and said that finance should be less proud. I regret that the Government have no equal in pursuing a course opposite to that advocated by Sir Winston.

It is right, as the right hon. Member for Taunton said, that we must start giving much more assistance and attention to manufacturing industry, not least because of the damage done to it over the past six or seven years. More than a third of the manufacturing industry within my constituency has been lost, and that is reflected elsewhere. These were small, good and viable firms which could have continued to earn a living by producing medium-tech articles and objects. Sadly, all these firms have gone and they cannot be resuscitated. We must make an early start in trying to build up and build upon what we have.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer looks to privatisation to make up his deficiencies. We know that there is a great deal of money sloshing around in the economy, and we know, too, that house prices have increased enormously. We know that credit levels are historically high and that credit card use has expanded out of all recognition. We know also that, because of the increase in house prices, house buyers' collateral is historically enormous. With a £60,000 house on which repayments of £20,000 have already been made, a number of people have many thousands of pounds of credit which they can use to convert capital to income. It is increasingly easy to convert capital to income, via building societies, among other ways.

The trouble is that the oil money is not enough. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is using that oil money. He is using privatisation money from British Telecom, gas and, later, water for current expenditure. With the use of oil money to finance current expenditure, and privatisation to finance current expenditure, the scene is being set for an election some time next year. That is what it is all about. Once again this country will pay a high price. It normally pays a bit of a price for an election. It will pay a much higher price for the next election, to the disadvantage of every one of us.

6.52 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made a good deal of the importance of high interest rates and the damage that they cause. He must consider also the impact on interest rates of the policies that are seemingly advocated by his party, should it ever come to power. As a certain leader across the Atlantic said, "We ain't seen nothing yet," as far as that is concerned. The right hon. Gentleman should take cognisance of the fact that the creation of new companies at the rate of about 550 a week suggests that entrepreneurs are coming forward and are not deterred by the level of interest rates — much as we would all, of course, like to push interest rates down. Certainly, the way forward cannot be the one advocated by the Opposition parties.

One strange aspect of the speech by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was the absence of any suggestion of his own policies. This was the dog that did not bark. Indeed, when pressed by one or two of my hon. Friends to vouchsafe comments on the Labour party's record or promises for the future, a note of panic entered his voice. He said, "We chose this debate so that we could talk about the Government's policy." That is understandable, given the sort of policies that are offered to the country. Whether we are talking about £10 billion expenditure, £28 billion expenditure or the £8 billion pot of gold mentioned by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) for health and social services, the impact and the consequence would be disastrous, not least, as I have said, on interest rates and the level of the pound. So-called social ownership is the side development of the party that has not changed the red flag for the red rose. Nationalisation is changed to social ownership, but the effect is the same. The same applies to the impact on pension funds, which affect many millions of workers throughout the country, and the threats which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and his friends have uttered about what they would do about Government interference with pension funds.

I could continue to list the threats and promises of the Labour party, but the debate is on the Government side of the House. As so often happens in important measures, the contributions from the Liberal and Social Democratic parties are difficult to find. It is always difficult to find their policies or, indeed, those who enunciate them. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) made an extraordinary personal attack on my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His only recommendation seemed to be that we should join the European monetary system. I listened with interest to a number of comments by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that topic, which will continue to be a subject of debate.

Some of my hon. Friends wish for even more capital spending. I hope that they take account of the autumn statement, which promises an increase of a third of £1 billion in capital spending across the programmes enunciated by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. That is an important step. Those who attach such importance, understandably and rightly, to Government spending should take due account of that fact.

Monetary figures and economic management are other sources of concern. We all recognise that the management of an economy such as ours is very delicate and complex.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are lured into the belief that the power residing within any Chancellor of the Exchequer to manage the economy is a great deal less than one might suppose from noting the debates in the House or from reading the views of the newspaper pundits. But to the extent that the Government can manage the economy, it is a complex process.

There must be a two-part approach to the economy. The first involves steady adherence to clear medium and long-term objectives and readiness to cope adequately with short-term pressures and dangers. No one has a better record in that regard than my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. Prior to his being Chancellor, he was Financial Secretary to the Treasury. If I may declare an interest, for a short time I had the privilege to serve as his parliamentary private secretary. He is aware of the short-term dangers. We must guard against the danger of the inflationary pressures which are building up within the economy. This is a crucial matter and one on which we have had outstanding success.

I recognise that present conditions are different from those in earlier years. Conditions today are better because of the Government's achievements. For example, unlike the conditions which obtained in the 1970s, the present inflation rate is far below the current level of interest rates. One effect is that, to a much greater extent, people hold a far larger proportion of their wealth in bank deposits than they did before. This is just one of the technical changes in the financial system which have occurred in the past few years. Those changes have disturbed the relationship between the measure of broad money and the national income.

That matter was discussed in detail in the speech, to which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor referred with approbation, by the Governor of the Bank of England at Loughborough university last week in which he said:

"It is fair to ask whether a broad money target continues to serve a useful purpose".

He went on to suggest that perhaps

"we would do better to dispense with monetary targetry altogether."

Whatever difficulties are associated with the measurement of monetary targets and monetary statistics, the Governor was also right, in a speech a fortnight earlier, to point out:

"Liquidity and credit have been gowing uncomfortably fast."

My right hon. Friend reaffirmed that he appreciates such dangers. I was glad to hear—I hope I correctly quoted what he said—that the Government's commitment to a monetary policy which will squeeze out inflation remains unabated. It is important that all his ministerial colleagues adhere to that commitment, but I recognise the pressures on them and feel guilty, as do virtually all hon. Members, about adding to the pressures on Ministers in spending Departments.

It is essential that we recognise, after all the Government's valiant efforts, that surrendering to inflation at this stage would be unthinkable. That must not be allowed to happen. We have come down a long and difficult road. There is too much at stake and the opportunities before us are too great to be missed.

There seems to be a spirit of defeatism—certainly among the Opposition—about what British industry is doing, and can do in the near future, about the opportunities offered to it. British industry enjoys many advantages which have been given to it since 1979. The featherbedding and overmanning of the 1960s are things of the past. They will only return if the Opposition parties seize power. [HON. MEMBERS: "Seize?"] Perhaps I should have said when they are granted power. Perhaps some of the people in Militant Tendency made me use that word. Should the unhappy occasion come to pass whereby nationalised industries and local authorities are told to take on labour, we would be back to featherbedding. But, with this Government's policies, those times have passed.

Record resources are being devoted to training and investment. The past few years have seen sharp rises in Britain's overseas assets, in company profits and in the underlying rate of productivity growth. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, sterling is now highly competitive. Its value against the deutschmark has decreased by about 30 per cent. since the middle of last year. There can be no country where venture capital is easier to obtain, although I recognise the problems caused by high interest rates.

The labour and trade union scene has been transformed, thanks largely to the Government's sensible trade union legislation, which gave back to trade union members the power they had lost to some of the union bosses. The attitudes which are now being reported on both sides of industry give me great confidence for the future.

All these factors add up to a great opportunity for British industry to compete ever more effectively on overseas and domestic markets. The outlook there is good. Demand in this country is strong. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, consumer spending will grow by about 4 per cent. next year. As the London Business School pointed out, world trade is expected to grow by more than 6 per cent. next year—twice this year's rate.

Provided that we can keep our unit labour costs under control, I believe that contrary to the Opposition's pessimism, there is every reason to look forward to a sustained continuation of the economy's growth of the past five years. The new jobs to add to the 1 million created since 1983 will come from there. Those opportunities will be taken by the 550 companies that are being created each week.

It is from there that the increasing Government revenues will come to produce yet more schools and hospitals and even better social services. The Opposition clamour all the time for those measures, but only the policies of the Conservative Government can produce the resources to sustain them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I inform the House that, by order of Mr. Speaker, the ten minutes rule for speeches is now in operation.

7.4 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) said that he wanted to expand social services but the hard reality is that the Government's attack on the ability of local government to sustain and expand social services decries that aim.

Mr. Maples: How can the hon. Gentleman say that in the light of an autumn statement that has just allowed an increase of £4 billion in local authority spending?

Mr. Barron: In the past seven years, Rotherham metropolitan borough council has lost more than £30 million of rate support grant which would have gone into

[Mr. Barron]

expanding those services and programmes that have had be put out to contract because of what is happening in the Department of the Environment.

When I looked at the Order Paper and saw the amendment tabled in the names of six senior members of the Government, including the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a phrase that we use in Yorkshire came to mind. I wonder how anyone could have the "brass neck" to table such a motion claiming the success of this Government's economic policies. That view was strengthened when I heard the Chancellor say that the Opposition did not care about the plight of the unemployed. I should like to talk about the problems of the unemployed and what is happening in the regions that I and many other hon. Members represent.

To claim that the Government's economic policies have been successful is difficult if one comes from regions that have faced massive rundowns in those industries that have kept employment stable over many years. It might be good to claim success if one is in the top 5 per cent. of those income earners who, over the past seven years, have been given back more than £3 billion a year by the Government in tax handouts to the rich. One might be able to claim success if people have invested their money in banks and so on, and are in the fortunate position of having money.

The right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), the hon. Member for Wycombe and the Chancellor talked of how well the Government had done. The right hon. Member for Taunton did not explain that in great detail. The 1 million jobs which we are told have been created since 1983 are certainly not full-time job equivalents. Since 1979, more than 1 million full-time job equivalents have been lost.

Unemployment in areas such as the Rother Valley is becoming critical. Since 1981, unemployment in my constituency has increased by more than 77 per cent. Of course, those are the numbers of registered unemployed, not the real figures. In July 1986, of the 6,421 registered unemployed in the Rother valley, 34·8 per cent. had been unemployed for more than 12 months and 36 per cent. were under 25. Recently, the registered unemployed figure increased to 6,500. It has been increasing every month for a long time.

It is estimated that the cost to the public purse of unemployment in my area is £42 million a year or, to put it another way, each person working in the Rother valley has to find more than £1,100 from his or her income to pay for the unemployed. Real unemployment in the constituency is hidden by certain facts. In July this year, 2,800 16-year-olds left school in the Rotherham metropolitan borough council area, which covers three constituencies. Over 89 per cent. of them are without work or are going on to youth training schemes or courses.

YTS first started in the economic year 1983 and I have only recently been able to get figures relating to its first year of operation, 1983-84, from the Rotherham careers officer for Rotherham borough council. Those figures show that the success rate in the first year of YTS in the area was a little less than 50 per cent. These figures have taken time to collect because not everybody completed YTS training in the first year.

In the earlier part of the debate, Conservative Members spoke of youth training as the be-all and end-all for kids, yet for the majority of kids it is like being in a revolving door. After 12 months — now presumably after two years — they come out of that same entrance. They leave the scheme knowing that they do not have a chance of full-time employment.

Quite recently, a Minister came to the south Yorkshire region and visited many constituencies including mine. The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), visited the area. I wish that he was present in the Chamber now so that I could invite him to tell the House what he saw when he visited west and south Yorkshire. The day after that visit he was quoted in the press as saying that he was

"deeply depressed by the experience and understood why people in coalfield areas thought that current spending on restoring the coalfield environment was not enough to solve the problem of unemployment and increasing poverty in such areas."

He was quite right. It is a great pity that there is no opportunity for the junior Minister to get that message to the Front Bench, especially the Treasury Front Bench which is not helping these people.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that NCB Enterprise Ltd. has provided significant amounts of money in the area which are facing difficulty. Has his area not received any money?

Mr. Barron: I do not know of one job which has been created in the Rother valley as a result of the work of National Coal Board Enterprise Ltd. The unemployment level in my constituency would account for over 50 per cent. of the jobs that will be created by the enterprise board by the end of the financial year. However, that board was set up to look after problems nationally and not just in my constituency but neighbouring constituencies. Some areas have far worse levels of unemployment than my constituency. Money is not being directed to these areas.

Many of today's speeches have concentrated on how the economy is expanding but we are talking about getting money into areas which are in desperate need of help. The level of unemployment is unacceptable to the Labour party and, I hope, to members of the Conservative party. What is more unacceptable is that more than 30 per cent. of a generation of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 in the south Yorkshire region are being denied the right to go to work and are denied the right to be brought up as we were in years gone by.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) that it is not a question of economics or economic philosophy but a question of people. People are in need in Britain not just in the north but in the south-east and south-west. The Government must change course and direct resources to these areas.

7.14 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Earlier in the debate the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) called in aid the independent commentators and financial market analysts who he said had been confused by the recent path and progress of policy. However, I believe that those who ended up with most egg on their faces after the last six weeks of policy were precisely those independent commentators and analysts. They have made fools of themselves in predicting and sometimes hoping about what would happen.

The market analysts believed that the short-term interest rate was bound to go up 4 per cent. — they

believed that it was only a matter of time—and some of the less ambitious put the level at 2 per cent. The general overwhelming consensus of so-called market opinion—I say so-called because it is the opinion of those who get their views projected by the media through their grumbles—was not the genuine reflection of opinion at all. These analysts were determined to prove the Chancellor wrong and somehow talk interest rates up to stratospheric levels. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was being judged on absurd standards by some of the market commentators, and some right hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley).

My right hon. Friend was right to delay the move on interest rates until he did. His timing was precisely right as it enabled the whole strain to be taken by a 1 per cent. increase. He nearly succeeded against the advice of the so-called experts in seeing us through this period with the entire strain being taken by the exchange rate without any interest rate increase. When it turned out that their forecasts were wrong, they dreamed up all manner of excuses such as Sheikh Yamani, the Bundesbank and everything else. The basic assessment of people who thought that sterling interest rates would roar up by 4 per cent. was wholly wrong. Their assessment was wrong for an interesting reason which is useful to consider.

The weakness of these analysts is that they think too much about domestic aggregates. To an extent they are led on by Ministers of all Governments who tend to talk in terms of what they can control on their home ground. In reality there is no real effective control of either the Keynesian aggregates or the monetary aggregates—all of which have proved enormously unruly. We have a wider open economy washed by enormous movements of capital and finance—£90 billion passes every afternoon through the London currency markets. Yet it is against that sort of background that some policy makers seriously believe that the Chancellor is in a position to influence the monetary aggregate in one direction or another and that he is magically responsible for these international forces. That is naive.

The Chancellor has to be totally flexible—more than the Chancellor of three or four years ago, let alone 20 or 30 years ago. He has to be ready to use interest rates, exchange rates and the cash reserves with great agility and inevitably, in a way which constantly changes. Those who argue that the policy is not clear or has changed, or complain that movements have changed over the weeks are absurd and are like those who in a rowing boat in a storm would complain when the oarsman changed direction to avoid being drowned by a wave.

In the past six weeks a great deal has emerged about the way in which our economy and aggregates operate. We have successfully got through a difficult period of pressure on sterling arising in some degree from reasons which had nothing to do with sterling. At the end of it all I agree that we are very exposed currency—about that there can be no doubt. If we do nothing about this and postpone the inevitable decision to join the exchange rate mechanism we shall fall under the gravatational orbit of the Bundesbank and that of the deutschmark. We should seek to resist that. We would do better to enter into arrangements which give us some say in the pattern of currencies in Europe rather than be left as a minor part of the deutschmark bloc. So I think we should get on with the inevitable membership of the European monetary system or exchange rate mechanism. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will prepare the way for action after the next general election. Then once the hothouse atmosphere of politics has cooled down the Government can join the European system when they have resumed office for a third term.

The other issue which has run through the debate so far is whether we have a choice between more public capital spending—my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has that choice—and lower taxes. Is that really what the debate is about? I believe that it is simply not the choice. I have never believed that there was such an intense choice between those two strategies. One reason for that belief was put clearly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, who reminded us that there is now substantial current infrastructure spending. Taxpayer-financed capital spending is roaring ahead. I should like there to be more in many areas.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) correctly reminded us of the miserable, dismal and ghastly conditions in which many housing estates in some of our great cities remain. But my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton further reminded us that the potential for such spending not just through public but through private finance—increasingly through private finance—is enormous and growing. That is not a fantasy being put forward by Conservatives in Britain—the idea is being adopted by Governments of all colours in almost every country.

Franchise financing is now beginning to be used for infrastructure and major public works throughout the planet and at last, we are doing it here successfully. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has at last persuaded the Treasury to drop its ridiculous arguments about crowding out and accept that the new bridge across the Thames at Dartford can be financed privately. It is a magnificent new infrastructure project and it is being financed privately.

We can go ahead with very much bigger infrastructure and enormous public works on the basis of new techniques for private finance. I hope that we adopt them. That leaves us room for substantial tax cuts as well. We have the resources to do both. They are essential because of the crucial effect that high taxes have on low earnings.

I do not understand Opposition Members, especially members of the Labour party, who do not seem to sympathise over the evil effects that big tax deductions have on pay slips, especially for people on very low earnings or people on pensions. It seems an utterly soulless approach and I plead with them to have a new look at the conditions experienced by some of their constituents.

Tax cuts are a major social priority, and they are a priority as well because they are a crucial element in job disincentives. Anybody who has seen how pay slips are reduced by national insurance contributions and tax must realise that those reductions have a great deal to do with the lack of job opportunities. They deter people who long to go to into work from taking a job.

It is questionable, too, whether tax cuts reduce revenue. We have evidence, on which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor touched this afternoon, to show that, at the higher levels, the more we cut taxes, the more revenue we get. That is what has happened under the present Government. We have halved capital taxes and doubled the revenue. Perhaps tax cutting produces more revenue,

[Mr. David Howell]

which can be used for the social purposes that Opposition Members so often advocate. It beats me why they regard tax cuts as so dreadful.

Countries all around the world are cutting taxes. The United States is doing so and Japan and Germany are thinking about it. Those nations understand that lower taxes means lower costs on industry, more jobs, more choice, better opportunity and better social conditions for families. We would be crazy not to follow suit.

7.22 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I wonder what Sir John Nott, the chairman of the merchant bankers Lazards, who doubled his salary last year to £366,436, would do with his tax cuts. I wonder about the others.

"He was among hundreds of top City staff earning six-figure pay packets even before the Big Bang, according to a report published today . . .

24 directors and nine employees earned more than £250,000 a year. Another 361 directors and 667 employees in 42 companies earned more than £100,000 prior to the summer round of recruitment."

So reports this evening's edition of the *London Standard*.

I am not against tax cuts, but I often wonder what happens with tax cuts for people in high income brackets. Presumably they have another holiday abroad, for example. In the meantime, my people, like those about whom my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) spoke, suffer massive unemployment and continue to live in bad housing where the drug problem is increasing and where there is despair among youth because they do not have jobs. They would like to be earning some money so that they could get some tax cuts.

The right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) made a telling point. He said that he believed more in people than in economic theory. That seemed to bring him right up against the Chancellor who said, as he always does, that the Labour party, when in power, doubled unemployment. I do not deny that unemployment increased from 2·6 per cent. to 5 per cent. between 1974 and 1979, but, in May 1979, 1,218,000 people were unemployed, and within three years, to October 1982, the number had increased to 3,049,000. That is a large increase in three years.

It is indeed people, the unemployed and their families, who matter. The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) mentioned strikes, but if people do not have work, they are hardly likely to go on strike—there is nothing to strike about. The Govenment's trade union legislation and unemployment have been used to discipline workers who still have jobs and to weaken the power and strength of the trade union movement.

Unemployment has another effect, especially in conjunction with high interest rates. In areas such as mine, which have high unemployment, one can go down streets of council houses which people bought because they thought that it was a grand thing to buy their house, and accepted the Government's policy, where there are a dozen or more "For Sale" signs. Because of unemployment, people cannot pay their mortgages. That is what unemployment and the Government's economic policies mean.

Of course, some people have done very well. I have mentioned a few who have done very well indeed out of the present economic system. I support the Opposition motion. If I have any criticism of it, it is that it does not go far enough. It does not say what we intend to do. I have probably been involved in every economic debate since I came to the House 22 years ago. We always get involved in great arguments about the best way in which to run the existing economic system.

The time has come to stop arguing about the best way to run the economic system. The time has come to change the economic system and get rid of it. We should have the principle of co-operation, working together rather than being in competition man against man, woman against woman, employer against employer and industry against industry. We need to have an entirely new concept if we are to begin to deal with the economic problems. I accept that all Conservative Members, and some Opposition Members, although those I am referring to are never here, would not agree with me on that concept. I am not talking about a command economy with which the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) used to frighten the life out of everybody, believing that we wanted an east European type system. We have never argued for that. We must have greater planning of the resources of our country and we must have greater control of our industry. We must also concern ourselves with the planning of our exports.

I said that I thought the speech of the right hon. Member for Taunton was excellent. However, I do not agree with him when he talks about setting the builders free. I want private builders or any other builders to build the houses, schools and roads that are required. However, we still have to do that with some measure of planning for, financial assistance and aid and it has to be paid for through the Government and local authorities. That is not feather bedding. That is putting people to work on the basis of seeing what the people need and planning the resources properly in order to deal with those needs.

That is the issue with which we are faced. If we do not do that, we will sink even further into the mire. The thought of another five years of government of the type we have had since 1979 fills me with absolute horror. For example, some Labour and Conservative Members are going up to Knowsley. Let them look around the areas where the factories used to be and see what has happened to them. Many of those factories are now closed. Those assets have gone. It is not like it used to be even in the 1930s. The factories closed down then, but they could be opened up again. We have reached a crucial stage. I support this motion but, my goodness, I believe that we must go much further, much faster and much more resolutely than at present.

7.32 pm

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Quite rightly, we have heard a great deal about job losses and oil. I represent a constituency which is not very different from that of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). It has many similar problems. However, no doubt he will realise that my view of the reasons for those jobs losses is not the same as his. It is an industrial constituency which has a large motor vehicle plant. It has the nation's only nuclear enrichment facility, a massive chemical complex and the country's largest oil refinery. Last week, we reached something of a milestone because when that refinery announced a further 700 job losses, it brought the total of job losses in my constituency over the past six years to a staggering 7,000.

During the 1960s, my constituency was booming. Vauxhall Cars established its second United Kingdom factory. A large oil and chemical complex was created and we had massive investment in housing and infrastructure. many people from Liverpool and the west midlands moved to the area because of its relative prosperity. I regret to say that, by contrast, during the 1980s we have had major problems and major job losses. Burmah Oil closed its refinery, Bowaters closed its paper mill, Vauxhall Motors shed 1,200 jobs, Associated Octel — makers of lead additives — cut back on workers as the world began to decrease the amount of lead in petrol. British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. reduced its staff by 600. Only last week Shell announced 700 further jobs losses on top of the 1,000 job losses last year, effectively bringing the work force of the nation's largest refinery down from 3,400 to 1,700 in less than two years. Even as I speak, a threat hangs over a further 300 jobs at the plant of UKF Fertilisers. As I said, there have been 7,000 jobs losses in six years, with hardly a family in my constituency unaffected.

It would be tempting to say that the job losses are the result of the Government's economic policies. Many Opposition Members would argue that that is the case. Many local politicians invariably argue that what is happening in my constituency is a direct result of the Government's economic policy. They say that the Government should pump in more taxpayers' money and that they should introduce import controls and increase regional aid. Those actions are not solutions. They avoid the economic reality.

I shall look at the genuine background to the 7,000 job losses in my constituency. The reality in the oil industry is that the demand for oil products has decreased by 30 per cent. There is a massive over-refining capacity in Europe and all of that has brought about much greater competition. My constituency entered this phase of greater competition with the largest United Kingdom oil refinery and one of the smallest. Neither was in any way competitive in international terms. Burmah, the smallest refinery, quickly closed, paying the price for being uncompetitive. It closed its doors for good in 1981, and now stands empty and derelict as a reminder of what happens when industry fails to adapt and improve.

The larger refinery, rather belatedly, took note of an independent assessment which showed it to be one of the most inefficient refineries in Europe in terms of manpower utilisation. That inefficiency was brought about by a set of factors which were endemic in British industry in the 1960s and 1970s. Those factors included restrictive practices stemming from over-powerful trade unions which prevented necessary change, weak management which failed to face up to the challenge of a new economic environment, and a regional grant structure which subsidised inefficiency and led to increasing uncompetitiveness and nearly led to the permanent closure of Britain's largest refinery.

The choice for that refinery was stark — either become efficient or go out of business. I am pleased to say that the company and the work force chose to face reality. The result has been the tragic loss of 1,700 jobs, but we now have a refinery with a bright future which has secured £400 million worth of new investment.

The reason for the job losses was not the Government's economic policy, but the sort of policy advocated by the Opposition. Those policies would have led to the extinction of that refinery. The present policies, although painful, have led to long-term survival. Similarly, job losses in Vauxhall Motors and Bowaters paper mill were brought about by the lack of competitiveness and poor industrial relations. The Vauxhall site in my constituency could have been the centre of General Motors' expansion in Europe. Instead, because of appalling industrial relations, those investments went to Germany. The acres of unused land stand as a monument to the poor industrial relations of the 1960s. Vauxhall is now producing more competitive products.

In both cases, the answer was to face competition and produce the right product at the right price. That is the only meaningful response. That is what the Government are advocating. By contrast, the Opposition continue to preach protectionist policies. Yet even that fundamental belief in protection did not prevent the Opposition spokesman on trade and industry from arriving at the Vauxhall plant in my constituency recently in a Nissan car provided by the local Labour party agent.

In the nuclear industry the job losses that we have sustained have occurred because of increased efficiency. The development of the centrifuge process of uranium enrichment has inevitably led to job losses. It is inevitable that as the world becomes more competitive, as stocks of fossil fuel become exhausted, and as we realise that fossil fuels are more valuable as a chemical feedstock than as an emergency source, we will have to rely more and more on nuclear power.

As industry gears up to face the challenges of the 21st century, what do the Opposition propose? They propose phasing out nuclear power and returning to an over-dependence on coal. They propose a return to the days when the National Union of Mineworkers held the country to ransom. As the Confederation of British Industry stated only this week, the rejection of the nuclear option will mean slower growth, reduced competitiveness, higher unemployment, higher costs and lower living standards.

The job losses in my constituency are not the result of the Government's economic policy. They are the inevitable outcome of years of restrictive practices, overmanning, unreal jobs, uncompetitiveness, Government subsidies, indecisiveness over the future of nuclear energy, over-taxation of industry and overspending by local authorities, all of which were encouraged by the Opposition's economic policies.

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Woodcock: I will not give way, because I have only two minutes left.

By contrast, as a result of Government policy I now have an oil industry in my constituency that is secure and efficient; a car industry that can beat any competition; a nuclear enrichment facility that is a major foreign earner; a new paper mill that is achieving production levels that were never dreamt of before, an industry that has more to invest after tax and which is now investing for the right reasons and not the wrong reasons. We have an enterprise economy that is producing hundreds of new firms that will grow and provide thousands of new jobs.

We all know that we need more jobs, but the only jobs that are worth having are real jobs that come from a competitive and efficient industry. What my constituency and this country needs is not the dreadful policies of the Opposition, but another seven years of the Government's economic policy.

7.42 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Page 25, paragraph 61, of the autumn statement reads:

"Throughout the current financial year growth in £M3 has been above the target range in the MTFS, with growth in excess of 18 per cent. in the year to mid-September. In part this has reflected the increased attractiveness of interest-bearing bank deposits relative to other retail deposits. PSL2, which includes most of these other deposits, rose by 14 per cent. during the year to mid-September."

I have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and you know Oldham as well as I do — that in my constituency of Oldham, Central and Royton very few people will get their hands on the autumn statement, and of those who do there will be fewer still who will understand the paragraph that I have just quoted. However, despite the complacent boastings of the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Dispatch Box this afternoon about the improvement in the economy, so many years of continual economic growth, and the million jobs that he claims to have been able to create since 1983, the working people of Oldham understand only that since the Government came to office their position has gradually deteriorated.

No matter where we look in Oldham, that is the case. If people want a job, they have to face the fact that 8,000 men and 4,000 women are registered unemployed in the town. At the jobcentre there are 508 vacancies for 12,000 unemployed people.

It may happen that someone in Oldham might want hospital care for his mother. Perhaps she has a cataract that needs attention. That person will be told at the local hospital that of course his mother needs treatment, but the waiting time is two to three years. However, if the mother has £1,800 and wishes to pay, she can have a private operation the following week. Arnold Broadbent and his wife, or Kevin Clegg and his wife, who do not have £1,800, cannot understand how the Chancellor can be so complacent about these matters.

Perhaps someone's son or daughter is to be married soon and needs a house. Perhaps they may be able to buy one of the splendid little houses that are still for sale in Oldham for £20,000, or they may want a council house. Of course, as soon as they try to borrow money on a mortgage to buy the house, they find that the rates have increased steadily during the time that the Government have been in office. Contrary to the claims that the rate of inflation is falling, they would have to pay more for their mortgage than they would have paid one month ago. They ask how that can be squared with the Chancellor's claims.

No matter where we look — at jobs, housing, health or education — we find that matters have deteriorated since the Government came to office. Yet time after time the Chancellor makes his claims from the Dispatch Box. He has claimed that jobs have been created. I would not want to be unfair to the Government. Of course jobs have been created in Oldham in an attempt to make up for the famous firms that have gone to the wall. Platts International, the textile machinery firm which was famous throughout the world, disappeared. Indeed, textile mill upon textile mill has disappeared.

Oldham metropolitan borough council has been trying to create jobs. It is one of those much maligned bodies — the local authorities — which the Government have lost no opportunity to deny funds. During the whole of the Government's term of office Oldham metropolitan borough council has tried to step in and do the job that any decent, self-respecting Government would have done. It has tried to encourage people to come to Oldham, and it has been successful, but without much encouragement from the Government. The council has tried hard to make up for the drop in jobs. It has been successful, but not successful enough to enable the Chancellor to stand at the Dispatch Box, as he did this afternoon, and expect people to support him again at the next election unless he does something about his policy.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said, the Chancellor must face reality and not suggest that there is nothing wrong, that his policy is working wonderfully, or that the fall in the value of the pound had nothing to do with him but is the fault of the City of London. We do not believe that for a moment.

With all the opportunities that the Government have had during their lifetime, such as the enormous revenues from North sea oil, which have not been enjoyed by our competitors — the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Spain and Italy — people of Oldham want to know why our currency, which is the measure of the confidence of the outside world in the future of our country, has fallen steadily against the currencies of other European countries.

How can it happen like that if everything is so successful? It may be that the Chancellor can produce statistics in the autumn statement which are difficult to follow for the man in the street, but all the statistics in the world will not convince me and the people of Oldham, and the many millions of other working people, that our country's economy is all right and that the Chancellor deserves another chance. He clearly does not.

There must be a solution — a very radical solution. I do not have time to go into that in 10 minutes, but I shall vote for the motion. I have every confidence that when our Government come into office, which may be within the year, we shall face a difficult task, but we shall resolutely tackle the most important matter of all, which is to get the unemployed back to work and create the wealth with which we shall be able to carry out the rest of our programme.

7.50 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): It is appropriate that at the end of a parliamentary Session we should be debating economic policy because it enables the Government and the country to take stock of what has been achieved and, of course, it enables us to explain what remains to be done.

The Official Opposition are on dangerous ground when they use the subject for one of their Supply days, because it enables their own policies as well as the Government's to come under much closer scrutiny. As the election draws ever nearer, the electorate will be looking not just at our record but at what the Opposition propose. For that reason all of us in the Conservative party welcome the debate.

The debate enables us to expose the frightening cost of the promises made by the Opposition over recent months. It is easy, in the heady atmosphere of one's own party conference — we have all done it — to say things that please one's own side, and to promise the earth. It is less easy to explain to the electorate in the ensuing weeks and months precisely how it will be paid for. It is even more difficult to explain to the electors that they, the electorate, will have to pay for those promises. Those promises, so

easily made, are now being costed. They will continue to be costed, and until the election is over and the Labour party has been trounced at the polls, we shall ram home the expensive nature of what it proposes.

The Opposition will, of course, point to the unemployment figures and compare them with the figures when they were in power. It is absolutely fair for them to do that as a political argument, but what they will not tell the electorate is that in 1979 this country was grossly overmanned in virtually every large industry, the Civil Service had swollen to figures hitherto unknown and inflation was approaching that of some of the South American banana republics. But for today's Opposition, the 1970s were the golden days. They were the days of financial irresponsibility, of spending more and more money, which had not been earned, but which had come from people's taxation or increased borrowing. They were the days of the gimmick and the cosmetic fix. They did more damage to stable, long-term employment and the value of people's savings than they care to admit. That is one of the many reasons why they were defeated in the 1979 general election.

We have seen Labour's economic policies in operation before. During the years of socialism our overseas economic debt doubled. It is a debt that this Government have had to pay, and are repaying. Spending on the Health Service was cut in real terms, although one would never have recognised it when one listened to some of the utterances by the Labour party, or the utterances of its Liberal and alliance partners, who have departed the scene of today's debate.

The Opposition, who posture before us today, promised before and did not perform. Now they promise more of the same medicine to the electors. They have the nerve to criticise this Government for what they have achieved. They offered, and imposed, nationalisation, with all the horrendous burdens that it brought for the taxpayer and the customer. They now call it social ownership, but the effect on the taxpayer will be just the same, and the change of a name cannot conceal their true intentions for the future of this country. Nor have they learnt anything from France's experiment in Socialism, yet today French men and French women cannot wait to get to the polls to turf out their Socialist masters and have done with that experiment. If this country were to follow the economic sirens from the Labour party, it would regret that. We would suffer as the people are suffering in some of the London boroughs that are under Socialism — Ealing, Lambeth, Haringey and Hackney. We would suffer the thought police that people are having to endure in Brent. We would have the economic drabness of Birmingham and Manchester.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), who is not in the Chamber, said that he was not advocating an eastern European state in what he intended to say, but I would tell him now if he were here that that is precisely what would be achieved if his proposals came into effect.

The Government have nothing to apologise for to the Labour party. Inflation is lower than in any year under the Labour Government. Output is at the highest ever and is still increasing. Economic growth is higher than in any year under their Government. The economy, which is what we are debating, is sound, and the Opposition, for all their rhetoric, know it. The electors know it. That is why we shall win the next election, whenever it is called.

7.58 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I think that there will be general agreement that the biggest problem that all Governments have faced since the war has been to marry a reduction or containment of unemployment with controlling inflation. To get inflation down and at the same time keep employment up is the $64,000 question that has never been answered by any Government since the war. The present Government make a great boast of the way in which they have reduced inflation. If one takes the bare statistics, they are impressive. The annual rate of inflation when the Labour Government went out of office in 1979 was 10 per cent. That figure is hardly admitted by the Government.

It has subsequently gone down, although it rose rapidly in 1980 as the direct and immediate result of the Government's first Budget, when VAT was doubled, contrary to the promises that they made in the election campaign.

Leaving that aside, it is true that the figure is now about 3 per cent. That has little to do with the Government's policies. The violent fluctuations in prices in the 12 years since 1974 have been due not so much — in fact, hardly at all — to the Government's policies, as to the rapidly fluctuating prices of the raw materials upon which our industry is based, and especially the price of oil.

I should like to put on record some figures that I got from the Library. Between 1973 and 1979 the United Nations world export price index of primary products, excluding crude petroleum, went up by 62 per cent. That increase in raw material prices took place mostly in the lifetime of the Labour Government. In the same period, crude oil import prices rose by 600 per cent. A vast amount of our industry depends on oil for its supply of energy. Between 1973 and 1979, the retail price index reflected those prices and rose by 140 per cent. That frighteningly high rate of increase was primarily due to the escalating prices that we had to pay for our raw material imports, and especially for oil. In comparison, between 1980 and 1985, raw material prices went down by 23 per cent., as against the increase of 62 per cent. in the lifetime of the Labour Government. Crude oil import prices between 1980 and 1985 rose, not by 600 per cent. as under the Labour Government, but by a little over 50 per cent. In the same period, the retail price index rose by 67 per cent.

The achievement suggested by those figures had very little to do with the Government's policies, or with the North sea oil bonanza, which was not created by the Tory party, although the Prime Minister might try to convince the people that it was. The fact is that the Government have had the bonanza of £53,000 million in oil revenues since 1979.

In 1985 alone, the Government got £11·5 billion, or almost £1,000 million every month from North Sea oil revenue. Every penny of that £11·5 billion has been squandered. The revenue collected last year from North sea oil can be compared with the £20 billion that was paid out in dole money, unemployment benefit and lost taxes. So oil revenue paid for just about half of the dole money that kept 4 million people kicking their heels in idleness, instead of giving them gainful employment. If we had invested that money instead of spending it on unemployment, we could have modernised our industry

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and our infrastructure — our roads, schools, hospitals, houses and communications system. The economy would have been in a much better state than it is now.

Despite what the Chancellor says, manufacturing investment in our industry today is one sixth what it was in 1979. Since 1979, £96 billion of British money has gone abroad and has been invested in modernising industry abroad. We are getting more and more imports because as our industry declines it becomes less and less modern. Our money is financing the modernisation of industry abroad and so imports sweep into this country. I challenge anybody in the House or elsewhere to say that he does not have something Japanese, Italian, German or whatever, in his garage or house, for example a television set or radio.

That is a sad state of affairs and the results of it are seen in many ways. The Government should understand that, unless they dramatically change their policies, the situation will get worse. For example, the attention of the House has been drawn to an article in *The London Standard* this evening about the colossal salaries that are being paid in the City and in big business. Sir John Nott, a former Secretary of State for Defence who was also at the Treasury, used to lecture ordinary workers on the importance of restraining their greed when asking for wage increases of £3 or £4 a week. As the chairman of merchant bankers, Lazard Brothers, he doubled his salary to more than £366,000 last year. That is not exceptional, many people in big business in Britain make that sort of colossal salary. So the Government should not lecture ordinary workers about their greed in wanting an extra £3 or £4 a week to maintain a reasonable standard of living for their wives and families.

The big complaint about this Government is the gross unfairness and injustice of their policies. I compare Sir John Nott's salary of £366,000 with the figures given in an article that appeared in *The Times* a few months ago:

"A big increase in employment of school leavers in Britain's hotels and restaurants, at weekly wages of between £35 and £40, is now expected after the reform of the wages councils."

Those wages will be reduced by £20 a week as a direct consequence of the Government's abolition of the wages councils. The Government want an increase in service jobs — in hotels and restaurants — where those kids will be fully employed and taken off the dole queue at a wage of between £30 and £40 a week. People in the City are earning £100,000, £200,000 or £250,000. Such are the figures paraded in the City.

The British people are seeing through this gross unfairness and will vote against the injustices which will be perpetrated and extended by the Government if they get the opportunity at the next election. The British people have rumbled the injustices and unfairness, the vastly increased unemployment and the likely prospect of their continuing increase. The people will say, "Get the hell out of it," at the next election, and a damned good thing too.

8.9 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I shall vote for the amendment this evening and nothing that I say now should be taken as anything other than wholehearted support for the Government's economic policy.

I hope my hon. Friends will accept that no economic policy can be considered entirely successful if all cannot share in its success. One group especially has not yet fully shared in the success of our economic policy, and it should now be enabled to do so. I refer to those who are on less than average earnings and who, at the moment, bear a quite penal burden of taxation.

Let us be clear about how many people are involved. About 8 million people in Britain earn less than £7,000 a year. Some 4 million, even on official Government definitions, earn less than 140 per cent. above the supplementary benefit level. Some 500,000 people receive family income suppolement. All those people have to pay tax at 29 per cent. That is a lot better than paying 33 per cent. tax, and a lot better than having to pay some of the tax rates that will be necessary if the Labour party ever comes to power, but those low-paid people are paying tax at a rate of 29 per cent.—a rate higher than the top rate of tax in the United States next year. Moreover, they must pay it at a starting point very much lower — at one of the lowest points in the Western world. They must pay 29 per cent. tax as soon as they start earning £2,300 a year. A person would not pay 29 per cent. tax in the United States at the moment unless he earned £17,000 a year.

It is not possible for the Conservative party to promise to increase the living standards of the low-paid, those on benefits who are being taxed, and the 40 per cent. of pensioners paying tax, except by reducing the burden of taxation upon them. Therefore, I have to say that I am disappointed that in the autumn statement we heard this afternoon we did not get any clearer idea of the scope that is available for those tax cuts for low-paid people in the Budget next year or of a medium-term taxation strategy for bringing down the basic rate of tax to well below its present level of 29 per cent., and indeed, for devising a much lower base rate for the low-paid in our society.

It should be obvious to everybody that such deep cuts in taxation will not be possible without substantial reductions in public expenditure. We must ask ourselves, after a series of autumn statements in which public expenditure has slightly increased from year to year, perhaps not as a proportion of GDP, why it has been so difficult for my right hon. and hon. Friends to achieve the reductions in public expenditure which they have honestly and earnestly sought.

There are three reasons why they have so far failed to make substantial reductions in public expenditure. The first is the public expenditure system itself. The system remains constructed, despite all our endeavours, on the basis of political entitlement rather than on the basis of pure economic and social need. We have only to look at the details in the Estimates to see the extent to which that political entitlement is reflected in over-provision in the Scottish and Northern Ireland blocks, in the dominance of defence procurement spending and in the sacrosanct nature of spending on agricultural support.

It is not simply the system that is at fault. We do not fully understand why the PESC survey and the Star Chamber do nothing to eliminate that political entitlement, but actually consolidate and perpetuate those entitlements by refining them and matching them, and eventually attempting to reconcile them.

Secondly, built into the public expenditure system is a massive proportion of expenditure on public sector pay, allowances and pensions. Some 60 per cent. of all public expenditure, nationally ordained and laid down, is somehow elusively outside the control of the Treasury and my right hon. Friends. It is controlled by agencies which

stand between the Government and spending on the ground. It should be obvious now to everybody that there are only two courses to take: either we bring such public sector pay within the full control of the Government—as indeed we are proposing to do with teachers' pay—or we devolve it to local bodies which can effectively reflect the real economy in our regions and make the necessary adjustments.

The third reason why it has been so difficult to reduce public expenditure is the benefit system and the extent to which it is simply demand led. I am not suggesting that our benefits are too generous. They are open-ended, and they are non-motivating in that they help to perpetuate dependence on the Giro, but, nevertheless, the extent to which they can continue to upset our public expenditure reviews is well brought out in paragraph 22 of the autumn statement that we heard today. There can be no finer indictment of the difficulties that we face in trying to control public expenditure than the wording of paragraph 22.

In conclusion, I must tell my hon. Friends that, despite their best endeavours, it is clear that we have not yet been able to refine and reform the system to achieve the sorts of reductions that we need in public expenditure to finance the necessary and permanent cuts in personal taxation that are essential if all are to share in the enterprise and success of our economic policy.

8.15 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I find this a very depressing debate, as indeed I am sure most people find any debate on the economic situation. But I find it depressing for a different reason. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer was as good as he says he is, and if any future Chancellor of the Exchequer were to be as good as he thought he might be and together they were given a magic wand, and if I spoke in the debate on this subject in a year's time, I should be facing the same problems. If that magic wand worked, and if the analyses and strategies that we have heard here today were all correct, I should still be facing a structural problem which would leave the area where I live and which I represent at a disadvantage in comparison with the rest of the people represented in the House.

That structural disadvantage is that while we are part of Britain politically, we are not of Britain. We are an offshore island of an offshore island. We are given parity when it suits the Establishment here, and we are denied that parity when it may be of tremendous advantage to the people in the north of Ireland. For that reason, I must draw attention to Northern Ireland's unique position in that regard and address my remarks not just to the Government but to previous Governments and to future Governments. Our problems did not start with this Government; they started long before they took office and will continue for as long as that structural problem remains.

It is even more important to set the matter in the context of the whole of the north of Ireland. I shall resist the temptation to speak exclusively about my constituency. I do not claim to speak for the 1·5 million people in Northern Ireland, but I hope that I speak on their behalf. The region is suffering more than any other part of the United Kingdom under the jurisdiction of the House in economic, human and social terms. In my constituency alone one person in four people is unemployed. Thirty-two per cent. of public sector vacancies advertised are community programme vacancies, as opposed to 14 per cent. in the rest of Britain. That tells us something about that type of programme and the demand for it. Forty-four per cent. of the population are under 25, and almost 30 per cent. of them are out of work. In a politically volatile situation, that surely is a recipe for disaster. Sixty-six per cent. of the population who are employed are in public services. That gives some idea of the deficiency in other areas of employment. The most startling fact of all is that Northern Ireland is the only region in the EEC where more people are unemployed than are working in the manufacturing industries. That is frightening, and is worth thinking about.

A similar phenomenon is present in the wages structure, in that there is also a lack of parity. The wage rate for males in Northern Ireland is 89·9 per cent. of that in the rest of the United Kingdom. I agree with what has been said about the pittances for which young people work because they are not protected by wages councils. In Northern Ireland only 10 per cent. of young people have contracts of employment. They are being used, and that position will blow up. Unemployment now officially stands out 22·3 per cent. It is even more startling that 11,700 more people have become unemployed in the past 12 months. Of those, 50 per cent. have been out of work for more than a year.

When those statistics are added up, they reveal a human tragedy which suggests strongly that the position in Northern Ireland is unique and that it must be considered differently from the rest of the United Kingdom. I repeat that even if the Chancellor of the Exchequer had a magic wand those problems would still have to be faced. Irrespective of a possible upturn in the economy, those deficiencies will remain.

The unemployment gap in Northern Ireland differs from that in the rest of the United Kingdom. During the past 12 months, male unemployment in Northern Ireland has risen by 9·8 per cent. My figures are taken from the annual report of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, which was published this week. That increase in male unemployment is startling compared with the increase for the same period in the rest of the United Kingdom. Again, that shows a disparity that is not made up through benefit or social security. That must be considered.

The construction industry is crucial to Northern Ireland, yet 2,500 jobs have been lost during the past year. If that loss of jobs is not halted now, half the jobs in the construction industry will have been lost by 1990.

The most serious position can be seen in agriculture. Northern Ireland has only two natural resources: people and grass. Agriculture is approaching a crisis, and many people would say that it has already reached it. The food processing industry is now almost non-existent in a country that produces beef, milk and a limited amount of cereals.

The Government should give their full support to the proposed EEC study of an integrated rural programme for Northern Ireland so that all the attendant problems in agriculture in Northern Ireland can be dealt with. They must be dealt with because Northern Ireland farmers now receive 48 per cent. below the 1984 farm income level. Farmers are receiving almost half what they received in 1984. Do not take my word for it. Take the word of the

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

Northern Ireland Economic Council. The farm labour force has dropped by 2 per cent., which is understandable with such returns.

The Government have treated Northern Ireland farmers very unfairly over the milk levy system, because none of the special EEC allocation of an extra 4·5 per cent. quota in 1984 came to Northern Ireland. The small producer in Northern Ireland does not receive the same level of quota as the small producer in England, Scotland and Wales. The Government cannot have their cake and eat it. This Government, or any Government ruling Northern Ireland, cannot continue with this unfair system of parity when it suits them, but not when it does not suit.

I began with a reference to the report of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, and I shall also finish with one, as it contains some constructive suggestions. I turn, first, to the restoration of a housebuilding programme, with increases in new buildings and rehabilitation. Expenditure on new build in Northern Ireland is £60 million, while expenditure on refurbishing stock is £58 million. The difference between the money spent on rebuild and on refurbishing is £2 million. That tells us something.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is approaching the 10-minute limit.

Mr. Mallon: I shall not continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall leave it to hon. Members to analyse the position in Northern Ireland, and I hope that they will consider my suggestions.

8.25 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Today's debate has been somewhat overshadowed by the autumn statement, but I wish to spend some time talking about interest rates and why I think that Britain is suffering from a very high level of interest rates. I shall offer a perhaps somewhat unusual explanation.

The inter-bank rate in the United Kingdom is 11 per cent. Most borrowers have to pay interest of between 12 and 13 per cent. With inflation at 3 per cent. that implies a real interest rate of 10 per cent., which is obviously extremely high. When that is contrasted with interest rates of 4·5 per cent. in West Germany and in Japan, 6 per cent. in the United States, and 7·5 per cent. in France, we must ask why there are such high rates in the United Kingdom. Several reasons have been advanced for that, such as the United States' deficit and the exchange rate, but the reason that I offer has nothing to do with those factors. It is a largely domestic factor.

Let us consider interest rates as the price of money and accept that the price of any commodity is affected by the relationship between the demand for it and its supply. In the context of interest rates, one can think of the relationship between the demand for credit by borrowers and the supply of savings from the economy. If there are consistently double digit interest rates, one can draw the fair conclusion that demand for lending and for credit is excessive in relation to the supply of savings. One must ask why that should be. After all, one would expect the two things to make a fairly neat balance.

A fairly convincing explanation is the liberalisation of the banking system during the past 10 years or so, and the extraordinary way in which the banking and credit industries in this country, and in other countries, but especially in the United Kingdom, have arranged new ways of lending people money. There has been an enormous increase in credit cards, in mortgage lending by building societies, and now also by banks, much of which leaks into consumption. There has also been an enormous increase in hire purchase, personal loans, and all forms of credit. All these forms of lending money have expanded considerably.

It can never have been easier to borrow than it is now. That comes back to the banking system and the way in which it operates. It used to be a system for saying no. If one asked one's bank manager 20 years ago for a loan, the odds were that he would have said no. Now bank managers say "Do you not want more?" They are almost selling loans to people. Indeed, they are inventing ways of creating lending and of expanding their own activities. That makes perfectly good sense to them, but it results in the extraordinary boom in lending that has occurred. Perhaps one of the bad things about that boom is that the banks have concentrated on the personal and property sectors, at the expense of others.

Let us consider the lending offered by the big banks during the last five years. I shall pick one example, but it could well come from any of the big banks. The loan portfolio growth for the five years from 1981 to 1985 has risen by 33 per cent. in lending to manufacturing, 94 per cent. in lending to financial services and distribution, 120 per cent. in lending to construction businesses, 170 per cent. in lending to property companies and a staggering 215 per cent. in lending to individuals.

The reason for it is that the big borrowers — the personal sector and property companies — are not very sensitive to high interest rates. Banks can increase their lending to them, and they are willing to pay higher interest rates. Individuals are usually concerned about the amount of the monthly payment and whether they can meet it, and not about the theoretical interest rate. Someone involved in a relatively short-term property deal does not mind paying high interest rates for a short time. On the other hand, if a manufacturing company is making a long-term investment, the decision is very different.

I suggest that banks, by their own activities, have swelled the volume of lending by persuading people to borrow more money. They have done so above the rate at which the economy normally supplies savings. The banks have therefore had to raise interest rates to bid back from the economy the savings that they need for funding. The only way they have been able to obtain those savings is effectively by raising interest rates.

Technically, that is done on the inter-bank market, although it is not necessary to go into that. However, it is a fallacy to think that this procedure works in reverse and that the bankers are sitting in their offices waiting to see how much is taken in in deposits before deciding how much they can lend. I do not believe that that is what they do.

The consequences of what I am saying are illustrated if one compares what is happening here with what is happening in West Gemany. In West Germany, bank lending is increasing at about 5 per cent. a year and the interest rate is about 4·5 per cent. In the United Kingdom bank lending is growing at more than 16 per cent. a year and our interest rate is 11 per cent. That confirms my view that the expansion of bank lending and the activities of the banks have almost of themselves driven up interest rates. They are certainly a substantial factor.

While the people at whom the banks have targeted their lending are not sensitive to interest rates, important parts of the economy are, particularly manufacturing industry. If a manufacturing company is thinking of making a fairly long-term investment in new plant or a factory, borrowing money at 13 per cent. for five or 10 years is a fairly terrifying prospect. One would want to be sure of achieving returns of around 20 per cent. before being prepared to enter into that type of loan commitment. Very often it is decided that the risks simply do not justify the cost, and that has an effect on manufacturing investment. That is shown, not just in the manufacturing investment figures, but in the amount of big bank lending to manufacturing companies.

The bad consequence is not just that investment by industries that cannot afford such high interest rates is effectively discouraged. There are other consequences. High interest rates devalue current assets and encourage takeovers. It is often more profitable and easier to buy existing assets on a devalued basis than to invest in new plant and equipment. That leads to a short-term view of investment opportunities, for which the City is often criticised. If one can get 10 or 11 per cent. by leaving one's money in the bank or by lending it to the Government at virtually no risk, it is not surprising that investment managers take short-term views.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend accept that manufacturing investment has increased since 1983 by as much as 25 per cent.?

Mr. Maples: I do accept that, but the bank lending figures speak for themselves. Although I am glad that manufacturing investment has recovered over the last few years, it is still down on what it was before 1983.

One of the other consequences is that because the City and the financial markets look at credit expansion figures, that of itself is a weakening factor on the pound. The raising of interest rates to protect the pound is simply the treatment of a symptom. In my view the same credit expansion is causing both the weakness in the pound and the growth in interest rates.

We are also seeing a very dangerous level of lending to the personal sector, and one is now seeing increasing defaults on mortgages, credit card payments and hire purchases. Personal sector liability has risen from 50 to 85 per cent. of personal sector disposable income in the last five years, and that must be dangerous and worrying for credit and financial markets.

Perhaps the worst consequence is that most of this lending to the personal sector goes into consumption, particularly on imports. We have a peculiarly high propensity to import, and every month we seem to hear of record retail sales, record levels of manufactured imports and record levels of personal credit. I cannot help thinking that they go together.

If this is accepted as a cause of high interest rates and the things that flow from it, we must take some steps to restrain the growth of credit and these high levels of imports. We should try to channel some of this lending away from the personal sector and into productive investments in industry. The Bank of England and the Treasury have the power to achieve that end if they want to. If we do not do so, we shall continue to suffer high interest rates and their consequences for a very long time.

I hope that the Chancellor and his colleagues in the Treasury will give this some thought. It is not an original analysis. It has been suggested by other people. However, it is not commonly propagated, and it is worth some investigation and action. If we take intelligent action to restrain credit growth, we could end up with lower interest rates, a stronger pound, a reduced level of manufactured imports and all the other good consequences that would flow from that.

8.34 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I hope that the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) will forgive me if I do not follow him at length, except to say that I welcome his comments about the effect of high interest rates, especially on manufacturing industry and job creation.

Like many of my hon. Friends, I am suspicious of economic indicators, and I am obliged to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for describing them as good luck charms. I am suspicious of economists as well.

Indeed, if the Chancellor looks at our historic development, he will see that the decline of the British economy is almost in direct relationship with the employment of economists in the public sector. Instead of indulging in the jargon to which my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) referred, it might be better if the Chancellor let rip his natural instincts and operated, not as an amateur economist, but as a transient secondhand car salesman. In that situation, Britain might well be better off than it is now. The right hon. Gentleman might not then have made his reference to another good year, which will be seen as a foolish comment by everyone living above a line from Watford to Bristol. If the Chancellor and his hon. Friends think that people in the industrial areas of the north believe that the last five or six years have been good, they are deluding themselves.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) referred to the unemployment figures. Today, the situation in our area is as bad as it is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). Once relatively prosperous areas of Britain are now suffering the economic condition of Northern Ireland, bringing with it long-term ills, risks and perils for our communities. Does the Chancellor think that such communities can long withstand a situation in which the majority of their young people are unemployed? Does he consider that British industry can survive when, for example, the special steels industry in my constituency is competing against the French, who in direct aid provide between £4 and £5 a tonne, while the British Government are providing 56p per tonne? Can the record-breaking, highly successful and recently privatised special steels industry in my constituency compete when the Italian Government allow their steel industry to receive energy at 37 per cent. of the price that our people must pay for electricity for their electric arc furnaces?

It is no good the Chancellor talking about cheap nuclear power. That has nothing to do with it. The Governments in Italy, France, Germany and almost every other OECD country recognise that they cannot afford an arm's-length relationship with industry and that their own industries must survive — [HON. MEMBERS: "The Chancellor is not paying attention."] Of course not. The

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Government are paying no notice. They are happy to see the young people of Britain blighted and our manufacturing base destroyed.

After six years, it is time that the Government did something about that. In the last 12 months there have been tremendous improvements in productivity in the coal industry, yet the Government cannot even perceive the logic of that achievement. When the CEGB sites its two new power stations on the south coast, it will not be required to ensure the shipping orders to enable the coal to be brought from the Humber or the north-east to feed those power stations. The Government will not even urge the CEGB to apply the logic of the research and technology carried out in Yorkshire on pressurised fluidised bed combustion. They will continue to say that the technology is not proven, although the Americans ordered two last month. We are at a pretty pass. For the Government to rely on the jargon which my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton demonstrated to be stupid is no answer.

I ask the Government to consider the cost of unemployment and to recognise that for each young person in my constituency entering the youth training scheme there is a basic cost of £50 a week. If only we had spent half that money on sustaining British industry and preventing the disease which now affects us, instead of treating the symptoms, we would be a great deal better off.

In the past 12 months the deutschmark has gained 23·1 per cent. against the pound. We once made fun of the Italian economy. I wonder how the Italians see us now that the lire has improved 21·1 per cent against the pound. The franc has improved 17·6 per cent. against the pound. What is worse, those countries have not had the benefit and boon of offshore oil. There we have it. The Government have enjoyed the enormous benefit of offshore oil and have simply presided over the erosion of our industrial bases and the betrayal of areas such as mine.

8.40 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I congratulate the Government on their economic policies. During the past seven years the United Kingdom, through the Government's activities, has managed not only to survive the difficulties which were directly related to a period of appalling Labour government but to come through what can fairly be described as 40 years of terminal decline. The Government have provided the opportunity for the country to get back into contention with the rest of the world. That is a tribute to the quality of my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister. They have persevered with determination against the background of a serious world recession, such as was almost impossible to imagine in 1979 when they first came to power.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) substituted adjectives for policies. I am sorry to say that that is becoming increasingly characteristic of his speeches. The difference between the realism with which the Chancellor put forward his arguments and the third-rate, tawdry approach adopted by the right hon. Gentleman was a salutary lesson.

At the end of the day much of the economic performance of other countries depends, and has depended for some time, on a number of important factors — savings, low inflation and investment. Against that background, the policies that we are pursuing are paying off with great dividends. On savings, we should look to the experience of Japan and the United States. One of the lessons that we had to learn was undoubtedly from the Japanese experience in the 1950s and the American experience in the 1920s. Tax-cutting policies provided substantial opportunities for their economies to take off and that enabled them to build substantial savings which in turn enabled them to invest in new industries.

In the early 1950s, Tashan Isabaki enabled the Japanese economy to take off and achieve the success that it has achieved over the past 30 years, despite the prognosis of the American adviser to the White House at the time that Japan was flat on its back with nowhere to go. The provision of incentives is the way to achieve enterprise in society. A main ingredient of the provision of incentives is to cut taxes, as the Chancellor and Prime Minister are proposing. That has great support from most of the British people, particularly from Conservative Members.

Manufacturing industry has increased by 25 per cent. since 1983, as I said in an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples). The importance of that is that, by providing the environment in which investment in manufacturing industry can increase, we are at the same time enabling our companies to engage in quality production. Over and over again we hear Opposition Members saying that we need to increase the volume of production. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that today and the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said the same recently. That is wrong. We do not need to increase the volume of production of goods which people do not want or need to buy, especially if the quality of the goods is not sufficiently high. In an intervention in the speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, I pointed out that one of our great difficulties is that our industries are not achieving a sufficiently high quality. There are many other factors involved, but that is an important one.

The gravitational pull of the argument of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was that the Government were encouraging imports. The point is not that imports are being sucked in, but that the quality of goods from abroad is, regrettably, superior. We must take that point on board for the sake of the constituents of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and others. I lived in Sheffield for 20 years and saw the industries decline. I knew many of the managers and people who worked there and I have great sympathy for the predicament in which they find themselves.

The reality is that we cannot compete with imported goods unless the quality of our products is good enough to ensure both that we can export them to other countries which want them and that they can compete in design, quality, price and marketing with other countries' products. I challenge hon. Members to tell me that they have not bought a Seiko watch, a Japanese car or a Japanese television set. If they were honest about why they bought those goods, they would admit that it was because they believed that they were getting something worth having.

Mr. Barron: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government should intervene in private industry, as the Japanese Goverment do, to ensure that products on the

bench and in scientists' minds are brought into production? Or does he agree with the Government that the Government should leave that to the free market?

Mr. Cash: In Washington the situation is different. I have sympathy with the car workers at Longbridge, but as individuals they now have to compete with fellow car workers in Washington. It is a question of the quality of production.

We must take on board this essential ingredient in our economic strategy. We have lived through a period when economic decline seemed to be with us. It was directly attributable to nationalisation and to the dead hand of bureaucracy which goes with it. That is now being substituted by the semantic alchemy of social ownership, which is utterly meaningless. It is nothing more than a change in emphasis. Many moderate Opposition Members know that it is just a con and a fraud on the British people.

When Opposition Members are joined by the expected flood of militants in the new Parliament, the word "nationalisation" will reappear. All the vague semantic differences between social ownership and nationalisation will be back with us again. That will be the means by which this country goes back to the dark ages of the economy if the British electorate vote for them in sufficient numbers, which I doubt will happen.

8.50 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I am sorry that the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not have the grace to give way when I sought to intervene this afternoon. I am glad that he is back in the Chamber, and I hope that I shall have the chance to allow him to intervene.

The point that I hope to make was made eloquently by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, who quoted a document which is well known to the Chancellor because he was the author of it. He was not just the signatory, he was the author and inspirer — one of the three musketeers. They consisted of himself, Sam Brittan and Peter Jay. All three have flown from their loyalty to the document. One disciple is left — young Tim Condon, who was Peter Jay's deputy at *The Times*, and who is still weeping bitter tears at the Chancellor's desertion from his former policy.

I remind the House of that policy. In the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1980-81, which laid out the shape of the medium-term financial strategy, the Chancellor said:

"Control of the money supply will over a period of years reduce the rate of inflation. The speed with which inflation falls will depend crucially on expectations both within the United Kingdom and overseas. It is to provide a firm basis for those expectations that the Government has announced its firm commitment to a progressive reduction in money supply growth . . . To maintain a progressive reduction in monetary growth in these circumstances it may be necessary to change policy in ways not reflected in the above projections. The Government would face a number of options for policy changes to achieve this aim, including changes in interest rates, taxes and public expenditure. But there would be no question of departing from the money supply policy, which is essential to the success of any anti-inflationary strategy."

The words "exchange rates" are not even mentioned in the text of the medium-term financial strategy. They began to creep in after two or three years and today the Chancellor explained that adjustments to the exchange rate due to the fall in the oil price have now taken place and it was now at a level which should be sustained. The strategy has been completely abandoned. Some new hon. Members do not remember just what it was that tied the Government down.

Just the other day the Governor of the Bank of England said in his lecture at Loughborough:

"Monetary targetry is only a means to an end. There may be circumstances in which the relationship between the intermediate target and the end objective changes unpredictably"

that has happened in the relationship between money incomes and money supply—

"as has indeed been our experience during the 1980s. In that case if the marksman does not have the wit to adjust his aim he may inflict severe injury on the economy."

That is precisely what happened. The severe loss of competitiveness in Britain because of the rise in exchange rates between 1980 and 1982 resulted in a swathe of destruction of manufacturing industry — more than Hitler managed to destroy in the war. It was destroyed by the pigheadedness of the Chancellor. Today the economy rests in the hands of this pigheaded man.

Where have we got in terms of the conduct of monetary policy to stabilise the exchange rate? The major change is the switch from a money supply target to an exchange rate target. That is what the Chancellor has done, although he will not admit it. While he was pursuing a money supply target, he neglected the behaviour of other economies. It was a marvellous idea. He could forget about international economic co-operation. It did not matteer what the other guys did. We could get automatic stabilisers working correctly in our own economy by stabilising the growth in the money supply.

However, it takes two to make an exchange rate. Exchange rates are vulnerable to the movement of United States interest rates and to the United States deficit, to whatever happens to the Bundesbank, to interest rate policy and to intervention policy.

We have heard references to international economic co-operation at various meetings. The Chancellor has complained about the misbehaviour of the American economy in particular. That economy is far more successful than ours, under a man who is every bit as Right wing, but he is less mistaken technically and less pigheaded than those who have shaped our Government's economic policy.

The management of the more complicated exercise of trying to stabilise exchange rates must have an eye on the prime objectives — of unemployment and inflation. It must also keep an eye on the intermediate target of the exchange rate. That can become complicated with movement of interest rates elsewhere. It is natural that the Treasury should have now adopted methods of analysis which come under the generic label of policy optimisation on which in 1975, by way of an amendment to the Industry Act, I required the the Government to issue forecasts.It is as a result of the discharging of that statutory obligation that the Chancellor made his statement today.

Also in that amendment, for which the Chancellor voted, was a requirement on the Treasury to implement the methods of policy optimisation on the Treasury model. Under a Tory Government, that has been done, and the Chancellor has adopted the computer programmes of the research group that I established in 1971 at Imperial college. Those are a practical guide to the complex business of trying to stabilise the exchange rate where others are playing their own game in other countries. That now needs to be carried on to the international level.

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

I suggested to the Chief Secretary that the Treasury should help to introduce such work in the design of international economic co-operation into the OECD, because that is now technically a much more sophisticated animal than the International Monetary Fund. The IMF is talking about taking over the OECD analytical system. The Chief Secretary fluffed it. He inquired at the wrong level in the OECD, and the opportunity for the United Kingdom Treasury to exercise some seminal influence on the development of methods in the OECD seems to have slipped.

Let us move from the broad macro-strategy to the control of public expenditure. I thought that the Chief Secretary was a person of some integrity, and I was astonished that he should have lent himself to that fraudulent act of examining speeches made by Labour Members, taking every little phrase, misinterpreting it and taking it out of context, leading to the absurd estimates of what effect Labour proposals will have on public expenditure. The Chief Secretary has shown himself in that office simply as the pawn of some scruffy little researcher in Conservative Central Office. That list has all the evidence of a Central Office hack job that Ministers are normally sensible enough to ignore completely. The Chief Secretary lent the weight of his office to a so-called costing of these policies, of which the Treasury officials who lent their hand to it should be thoroughly ashamed.

Again, to help us in the serious analysis of public expenditure questions, I made a further suggestion to the Chief Secretary, that the annual public expenditure White Paper should be presented to the House in such a way that we could genuinely examine alternative policies, so that if we wanted to argue for a change in the pupil-teacher ratio, or greater expenditure on the youth training scheme so that it could be made effective, or whatever, the effects could be traced through in all the interactions and ramifications within the expenditure of the different Departments involved. Again, the Chief Secretary fluffed it, and has presented to the House simply that document, which I agree is an improvement over what it was, but is still a totally inadequate basis for the serious costing of alternative policies.

The Government are not concerned about informing the House or the national debate on effective alternative policies. They are simply exposing themselves to the same hack attitude that the Conservative Central Office, under the chairmanship of the Tory party leader, is showing to the BBC.

There is then the effect on the micro-structure of the economy. Up to a point, we had an honest speech from the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock), who represents various areas around Stanlow, the Shell oil refinery, outlining the factors that have caused the 7,000 redundancies in his constituency. It is important for the Government to be able to follow the implications of the changes that they are making on the fortunes of the major companies and on a representative sample of the smaller companies, so that they can see, for example, when corporation tax provisions are changed, whether companies have any taxes that they are liable to pay against which they can offset allowances.

The person who pioneered that work in the United Kingdom was Dr. John Kay, who has just moved from the Institute of Fiscal Studies to director of the centre for business strategy at the London Business School. He led the way to the Treasury implementing a similar way of analysing the tax liabilities of companies. So anxious was the Chancellor for Dr. Kay's insights into the workings of the markets to play a part in the regulation of the stock exchange that he knocked Dr. Kay off the list of nominees of the Department of Trade and Industry to be on the Securities and Investments Board.

On the question of what should be done about companies, again the Treasury is moving. I have argued for years that our analysis of the economy is inadequate if we do not, and cannot, look at the position of individual factories, establishments and companies within our constituencies, where we know perfectly well what the real impact of Government policies will be, but which are a shut book to the Government, using simply aggregate statistics.

Again, we have an initiative, which I warmly welcome, financed by the Chancellor through the so-called consortium of the Treasury, the Bank of England and the Economic and Social Research Council to develop a micro-to-macro-economic model system. For example, a model might be constructed to take into account the behaviour of competing firms and the factors influencing individual management decisions on output, prices and factor demands.

I refer to the work done on the Swedish economy. Sweden has individually modelled enterprises, down to the production division level, of 80 per cent. of Swedish manufacturing industry. Therefore, it is able to trace what the effects of, say, the exchange rate shift would be on different firms. The Chancellor's PPS may smile. He comes from a city that has just been through an enormous big bang. The investment analysts are paying themselves fantastic sums of money. I am sure that he is not aware of the fact that the biggest market for company level analysis in responding to Government behaviour is the investment analysis market. That will be the market which the London Business School will supply under the consortium that I mentioned.

Arrayed on the Government Front and Back Benches is the old, incompetent guard of the pigheaded, highly privileged but incompetent tradition within business, banking and finance in the Tory party. While those are the intellectual influences that prevail, and while that is the level of complete incompetence of which the Chancellor is aware—nobody knows better his changes of position—there is no hope for the economy. The dishonesty, as well as the incompetence, of the Government, will see them out of office.

9.6 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Notwithstanding the tragic problem of unemployment in my home city of Nottingham, I am more than content to support the amendment in the name of the Government and to reject the Opposition motion. Many contributions have been in the customary macro-economics of debates of this kind. I join with the comments of one of my colleagues, my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock), who made an excellent speech. He related this debate to his constituency and outlined how events in his constituency had led him to support the Government's policy.

In Nottingham, 23,500 people are unemployed. That is a great personal tragedy to thousands of families. A

Labour party pamphlet that has been circulated in that city has the same disregard for the truth as most of the speeches that we have heard from the Labour Benches. For example, the pamphlet talks of seven disastrous years and says that our city has 14,000 more unemployed than it had in 1979. I cannot deny that. It is a fact. However, the pamphlet slips up because it points out that there have been 30,000 job losses in the city during the past seven years. Perhaps the Chancellor, with his great knowledge of mathematics, will confirm my calculation that that means that we have created 16,000 jobs in the same period.

I draw the House's attention to the reasons that the Labour party gives for unemployment and the companies that it lists that are shedding jobs. Two companies appear to account for half the number—TI Raleigh, which has shed just under 6,000 jobs in that seven-year period, and Players, which has shed just under 2,000. It is being suggested that that is the result of Government policy, and I accept that it is in one small respect. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who was a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, will be well aware that one of the results of regional grant aid was to shift quite a few hundred jobs from TI Raleigh in Nottingham to South Wales. I am delighted that we have reformed our regional policy since then. Far too much money was spent merely shifting jobs from one area of the country to another.

The real loss of jobs at Raleigh has nothing to do with Government policy. Nottingham is the proud home of a vast university as well as a vast technical college and polytechnic, which means that if it were in another country the city would be full of cyclists, yet we hardly ever see them. Our young people, unemployed or not, drive bangers or ride motor cycles. My son has a banger, and he will not thank me for calling it that because it is his pride and joy. There has been a massive decline in the home market of the cycle industry because many people no longer ride bicycles, and there is no point in blaming the Government for that. If there are no customers for cycles, cycles will not sell.

The other company that is referred to in the pamphlet is John Player. As I have said, the pamphlet is seeking to blame the Government for the loss of 2,000 jobs in the tobacco industry. There is great dishonesty on both sides of the House in the debate about smoking. Everyone complains about the habit, but when smoking declines it is the height of hypocrisy to publish a leaflet that claims that Government policy has destroyed 2,000 jobs in Nottingham.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I shall try to bring the hon. Gentleman down to earth. What would he advise the 42 per cent. of all those under 24 years of age in my constituency to do? The males would have gone normally into the mining industry but that is no longer possible, and there are no other opportunities and no Government aid to assist employment in the area. They have no bangers or motor cycles.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I cannot speak for the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He represents a mining constituency, and I think that the entire House sympathises with the towns and cities throughout the length and breadth of the country that relied on one industry. When that industry has to die there is a social problem, and nobody will argue on that ground. The single-industry town is our nation's tragedy and there are no quick fix-it answers to the problem.

Another company is referred to in the pamphlet and the job losses in it are not, as claimed, the result of Government policy. The company is in the textile sector, and as I spent about 30 years in that industry, courtesy requires me not to name it. I do not wish to intrude on private grief. It is sufficient to say that the group in which I was engaged — I was proud to be one of its chief executives — employs more people now than in 1979, even if the group that is named in the pamphlet has shed 3,000 employees.

No one denies that there has been a decline in the textile industry, but I take this opportunity to thank my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench for the work that they have done. They listened honestly to representations by hon. Members on both sides of the House on the multi-fibre arrangement. The author of the pamphlet is supposed to be on our side in fighting for a good multi-fibre arrangement, but when the county council in the area which I represent, which is Labour-controlled, organised a local conference to enable us to put our case together prior to putting it before Ministers, he began to criticise the British retail trade. In particular, because he happens to be one of the far-Left politicians, the author chose to criticise one of our most successful high street chains, Marks and Spencer plc. Somebody should have told that prospective Labour party candidate that, but for companies such as Marks and Spencer, there would not be a textile trade in this country. Job losses would have been 10 times worse. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members can rattle on, I do not mind.

The pamphlet went on to state, in the same dishonest vein as members of the Opposition Front Bench adopt, that, somehow or other, unemployment can be cured in the lifetime of a Parliament. The leaflet sets out a scheme to create 5,000 jobs in each of the five years' duration of a Labour government. Lo and behold, there will be nil unemployment in the city of Nottingham. It is utterly dishonest. Fortunately, the author of the pamphlet knows as much about the city of Nottingham as Arthur Scargill did. The people of Nottinghamshire told Arthur Scargill where to go when he tried that stupid business two years ago. I thank my right hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench. I would thank them much longer, but I have only a couple of minutes in which to conclude my remarks.

Hon. Members on the Government Front Bench have targeted real help to cities such as Nottingham. One of the Government's great unsung successes has been urban development grants. This week, I was grateful for yet another grant to our city. In the past three or four years, about £4·5 million of public money has produced investment of some £25·5 million in Nottingham. That policy is one of the great successes. Nationally, though it is decried by Labour Members, £100 million of public money has produced well over £400 million of private investment.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that, at the end of this debate, when the Opposition have apparently attempted to censure the Government on their economic strategy, the Chamber is almost devoid of Opposition Members, including the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who led the debate for the Opposition. Does my hon. Friend also

[Mr. Cash]

acknowledge that this has been one of the most tawdry exhibitions by the Opposition that we have witnessed in this Parliament?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: That is a fair point. *[Interruption.]* May I conclude? That is the arrangement that was made, if that is what the Opposition Front Bench is getting so uptight about. I ask the Government Front Bench to hang on tightly to the basic policy of restraining inflation. Nothing destroys confidence, savings and jobs more than runaway inflation. My great worry is that, in a city such as Nottingham, there are thousands of young people who have no real memory of the monster of runaway inflation that so characterised the Labour Government's term of office. Heaven help us if Labour Members have a chance to do that again.

9.15 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): At the outset, I wish to direct a very serious matter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. During his introduction of the autumn statement, he informed the House that the information about it would not be available to hon. Members or, presumably, to anyone else until he sat down. He sat down at approximately 10 minutes to four. At about five o'clock he discovered a Conservative research department brief, marked "confidential" in a telephone booth in the House. That document contained all the details of the statement, but came from the Conservative party office. Clearly, that is a serious matter. Obviously, the Chancellor would wish to address his mind to it, particularly as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is also the chairman of the parliamentary party and sits in the Cabinet. Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer assure us that this information was not available confidentially to the Tory party central office so that it could make notes on the statement? I am quite prepared to give way to the Chancellor.

Mr. Lawson: I can give that assurance.

Mr. Prescott: Do I understand the Chancellor to say that he gives the assurance that it was not given to the central office before 10 minutes to 4 o'clock? If that is the case, I must say to him that the detail of the six or seven pages of his statement would have had to be printed, produced and brought to the House, all within one hour.

Mr. Lawson: I will happily double check. I shall explain the procedure that we use. That document was produced by my special advisers in the Treasury. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] The top page was stapled on later. It was not done by Conservative Central Office.

Mr. Prescott: I do not find the Chancellor's answer satisfactory. I now give him notice that I should like him to reflect on the answer he has given to the House. At the end of the debate and after the House has met, we could consider through the normal channels whether the right hon. Gentleman wants to think further and give the House a more informed reply.

Undoubtedly, the debate has shown us that the exchange between the two sides of the House and the nature of the autumn statement have dominated the Opposition's motion on the economy and employment. Perhaps that was inevitable, but it has been clear that, apart from the Government Front Bench and one or two other Conservative Members, most hon. Members have been highly critical of the performance of the economy after seven years of this Government. Having listened to the speeches, one would have thought that Labour went out of office 12 months ago and we were still being blamed for all the problems in the economy, or that it was the Labour party that paid for the advertisement that said that Labour was not working, when unemployment was just over 1 million.

The debate has flowed between both sides of the Chamber. It has shown that the level of investment, particularly in manufacturing, is still below the 1979 level. There is a crisis in the balance of payments and a trade deficit in manufacturing. Exports may be increasing, but imports are increasing much faster. Even much of the evidence on interest rates — we already know that we have record interest rates compared with other economies — and the Chancellor's facts on inflation had been somewhat tampered with, inflation being taken as an average for the rest of Europe and the averages during the terms of the Labour Government and the Tory Government being compared.

We have seen a great deal of manipulation of statistics and even a picking of years. Unusually, the Chancellor chose 1973 as the base year. Most of the evidence given for the revival in the British economy, according to the Chancellor, is taken from before 1981 or 1982, as though the Conservative party did not come to power until then.

One particular aspect missing from the autumn statement was a projection of what would happen with employment. There is a debate about unemployment. Few Conservative Members, with honourable exceptions, mentioned the problem of unemployment. A great deal of play was made of inflation, but the consequences of the mass unemployment which we have seen develop after seven years of Tory Government rule are clear for everyone to see, no matter how the figures are dressed up.

The Opposition are grateful for one factor in the speech — the Government claim that the levels of public expenditure now are higher than they were under the Labour Government. The intention is to raise the contingency reserves, to use other resources, such as those obtained from privatisation, to increase the levels of public expenditure. Those wasteful bodies, as the Chancellor and other Ministers regard them—the local authorities—will be used to spend the money. Those are precisely the sort of methods that the Labour party has argued should be used to get our people back to work. This very much reflects the evidence—it had to be dragged out by way of a leaked document—given by the Government to the European Commission when they were pleading for more money to deal with the collapse of aspects of the infrastructure — the decline in our inner cities and the stagnation of our housing programmes. All those items are spelt out in the documents given to the Commission because the Government were seeking money. They are precisely the type of public investment projects that the Labour party believes can be used to get people back to work.

I was somewhat surprised to hear almost cheers from the Conservative side when the Chancellor claimed how good the Government were at using public expenditure. Although we may argue that the expenditure is not large enough—there will be differences between us—we would

be churlish not to welcome the fact that public expenditure, in certain areas, will be used to considerable effect in providing real jobs.

When the Chancellor was pressed for his predictions on unemployment he could not answer. He discussed whether unemployment might reach 3·2 million. The document that was given to the Commission suggested that by 1990 it would still be about 3·2 million. That is before the Government get to work on a further fiddle—the 18th—of the unemployment figures. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster may well regret his statement that the Tory party should not be re-elected if unemployment is not below 3 million. I suspect that more and more pressure is being applied for an increase in public expenditure, to chase more and more people from the employment exchanges, to create more and more low-pay schemes and more part-time and self-employed jobs in order to doctor the figures in an attempt to massage them down below 3 million.

We heard the arguments about the real levels of unemployment and of employment. The Government said that they have created a million jobs — indeed, that figure is in the amendment to our motion. The Chancellor is well aware that that 1 million is made up of over 823,000 self-employed. The level of self employment has increased by 823,000 during the Conservatives' term of office. That increase is largely due to a statistical exercise. The Chancellor is aware that the figures were based on a 5 per cent. survey and they have been constantly rejigged. That has caused concern among statisticians as to whether one can prove the claimed increase in new jobs. That is the least of the Government's statistical offences.

It is true that more part-time work has been created, and, indeed, it is the Government's policy to encourage that. If one wanted a fair measure of an increase in employment one must consider the 142,000 extra people in work when Labour left office compared to when it took office, and the fact that almost 1·5 million more people are unemployed now compared to 1979. I do not deny that there will be more and more part-time and flexible working within the economy, but one must judge that in terms of full-time equivalents. It is a crude measure, but it has been used by the Bank of England. I asked the Library to compare the period when Labour was in power—1974 to 1979 — with the period of this Administration. Between 1974 and 1979 the increase in full-time equivalents was 93,000. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) suggested that, under this Government, 1 million full-time equivalent jobs had been lost to the employment market. The Library's calculations show that that loss is 1,936,000.

That is the scale of the decline in employment prospects since 1979. However it is measured, it is a catastrophic decline. When Britain's unemployment is compared with that of any of our competitors, using the OECD average, the EEC average or the figures I have here from a very authentic source, we find the same story. The British average is 13·3 per cent.; the EEC average is approaching 10·8 per cent.; and the OECD average is 8·1 per cent.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): What is the source?

Mr. Prescott: My source is the private and confidential document given to Lord Young to brief him on the unemployment figures. We presume that that document is acceptable.

In reality, whether in percentage or absolute terms, the Government's policies have had a catastrophic effect on employment, and are a direct cause of the high level of unemployment. Perhaps, as suggested in the debate, the Government will switch from a monetarist policy. I believe that they will.

It is important to compare what has happened to Britain's patterns of public expenditure with those of our main competitors in Europe. They increased their public expenditure, as did Britain, but they put less into defence and more into housing and infrastructure — the very things that the Chancellor complained about in his evidence to the Commission when he was asking for money. One of the essential differences between us and our European competitors is when it comes to managing the economy. It concerns the quality and the type of public expenditure.

It is a bit much for the Chancellor to suggest that the Opposition exploit the unemployed when his party gave us "Labour isn't working." More important than that, the Government have conducted 17 fiddles of the unemployment figures. Their latest pernicious activity is the suggestion that the unemployed should be subjected to an interrogation about whether they are working.

The Government are suggesting that those who suspend people's unemployment benefit if they fail a questionnaire should become bounty hunters and be paid according to how many people they suspend from the employment benefit. That is shown by another Government document. The evidence has been debated in the House. That demonstrates the Government's pernicious approach to the unemployed.

The Government's policy is to drive people off the employment exchange and not to provide them with work. When the Government say that the Opposition exploit the unemployed, I must remind them of a notice that we received in our post this morning. The Government create part-time employment and talk of successful business and of removing the barriers to business. The right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) said that the burden of costs on business should be relieved. He mentioned electricity costs, but the Government talk about reducing health and safety protection and removing employment protection rights.

The Equal Opportunities Commission told us today that anybody who appeals against unfair dismissal will now have to pay a £25 tribunal fee to have a complaint heard. That £25 fee will presumably be taken from a single householder who gets £30 a week benefit, supposing that it has not been suspended. That is the kind of priority that the Government give to the unemployed and people in part-time and other forms of employment about which we have heard today.

Hearing the right hon. Member for Taunton speak of reducing costs reminded me of the Chancellor saying that the Government had managed to secure increased revenue from corporation tax. The reason is, presumably, that corporation tax has increased by about 25 per cent. since the Government came to power. It involves many thousands of millions of pounds made by companies.

The prevailing wisdom is that companies will invest. We know that they have often not invested in machinery but, more to the point, they have not put their money into training either. We have the worst trained labour force of any developed country, yet companies put only one fifteenth of 1 per cent. of turnover into training. According

[Mr. Prescott]

to the Manpower Services Commission, most of our competitors put between 2 and 3 per cent. of turnover into training.

Mr. Lawson: I have said that.

Mr. Prescott: The Chancellor should remember that he has relieved companies of the training levy, dismantled several of the industrial training boards and witnessed a collapse in the number of apprenticeships. If British companies invested only 1 per cent. of turnover on training, that would raise between £6 billion and £8 billion. The taxpayer would then not have to find the £2 billion now needed for the skivvy youth training and community programme schemes.

The Chancellor asked me how much Labour's programme would cost. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury has made some scandalous charges. He should be thrown out of accountancy in view of what he said about the costing of Labour's programme. The Chief Secretary has trawled through various speeches and documents, some of them quite wrong, and discovered, apparently, that our training programme would cost £900 million. Let me tell him, the analysis was incorrect. More importantly, why should we not impose a levy on industry to pay for training? Previous Tory Governments used to believe in levies because industry would not invest in training. Do not be surprised, industry will pay for training as our competitors and many industries abroad already do. We are short of every kind of skill in this country and we have to make a rapid and radical change in our training programme. There is no doubt about that. We know that it costs money. Industry is not paying anywhere near its fair share, even on the Chancellor's own evidence.

Many of the 26 proposals mentioned in the document are wrong. The Chief Secretary has already admitted that perhaps on education he was wrong. He quotes speeches and documents. The Labour party will put through its commitments in the manifesto when we decide them in the normal way. I shall give the House some examples. The Chief Secretary said that there is a commitment to a 35-hour week. That is not a commitment anywhere in our document, although we might like to move towards it. The Chief Secretary gives us a bill of £3,000 million for that. He also mentions early retirement at 60. That is something that the Government have regrettably changed. He gives us a bill of £2,600 million, but that is not a commitment. We also have no commitment as to precisely what the minimum wage would be. There is a commitment to a minimum wage but one cannot possibly estimate the cost without knowing what that wage will be. Yet the Chief Secretary tells us that it will cost £1,000 million. Therefore, there is a total bill of £6,600 million and no commitments. It is a charade. The Chief Secretary should answer those questions.

If the Chief Secretary looks at our document he will also see that money should be made available for housing. We are witnessing the building of 2,000 houses fewer per week than we did under a Labour Government. That is one indictment of the Government. The local authorities have the money—£6 billion in capital receipts—and there are 500,000 building workers unemployed. My constituency has worked out a programme for 1,000 houses at a cost of £66 million a year. That would provide 4,000 jobs and good training. I can give the House many public expenditure examples where the Chief Secretary calls for the money from the EEC.

We are working extremely hard to see where the extra jobs will come from, whether in nationalised industries, local authorities or the private or public sectors. Yes, they can do much more to provide jobs and they will, make no mistake about it.

There is one carefully costed document that I would like to give the Chief Secretary. It has been worked out in detail with the financial people and spells out precisely what the jobs are and where they will come from. It is an inner-city authority with a massive housing problem and is in massive decline, which is recognised by the Government in their inner-city partnership schemes. That authority is Southwark. It has produced a plan which shows precisely where the jobs will come from. There will be 5,800 jobs, 25 per cent. of them in housing and about 20 per cent. in social services. I notice that many of the jobs provided in social services are to deal with the problem created by the Government when they kicked people from mental hospitals in the name of community care and dumped them on local authorities without providing the resources for the authorities to deal with that.

I hear the Government talking about £4·5 billion they are giving local authorities to assist them in their expansion programmes. Local authorities have lost over £20 billion in the reduction in the rate support grant. That is why we have seen a reduction in jobs and services. We must be prepared to look at the needs of our inner cities, the needs of our services, the need to build houses and the need to train. Many of our local authorities, which have been doing a valiant task trying to create jobs and improve services, could provide a considerable amount of the jobs we are talking about.

I shall let the Chancellor into a secret. A proportion of the 1 million job target that we have set to achieve over the two-year period will almost certainly come from local authorities. I have three projects before me now; Lancashire enterprise body, Southwark and the Hull corporation. We could certainly put together 10,000 jobs there if he is prepared to take those targets now. We can do that if the resources are available. Local authorities are engines of growth. They are important in the development of our economy.

It is all very well for the Chancellor to smile but his proposals today hope to use the local authorities in the spirit of election because they learned a lesson. In 1983, the only time when the figures showed a flip upwards in reducing unemployment, the Chancellor told local authorities to spend, spend, spend public money because he wanted to reduce unemployment before the general election. The Chancellor has done the same today. No doubt the Budget statement in March will add to the tax cuts in today's proposals.

The Opposition believe that local authorities and nationalised industries can play a role in keeping real jobs, with real money, meeting real need. We shall provide the alternative to the skivvy community programme and YTS schemes which the Government have used to reduce the figures. We shall provide real jobs and real money to meet real need.

9.40 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): One of the penalties of trying to allow

everyone to speak in the debate and therefore having only short wind-ups is that I cannot, alas, refer to as many contributions as I would have liked.

All of us recognise—and no one would claim to the contrary — that, despite the improvement in the economy, there are still, and always will be, enormous challenges even to sustain our present standards of living, given the highly competitive world in which we live, and to keep our industries constantly competitive, changing and flexible. There are also enormous challenges to deal with unemployment.

The contributions from Opposition Members showed that they were living in the past. They fail to recognise the highly competitive world in which we live. They fail to recognise how things change. They seem to believe that past habits, structures and types of industry can go on for ever. They would do well to heed the contributions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock) and for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) who made pertinent comments on that point. Opposition Members also fail to recognise the considerable progress of the past five or six years, which must be the background to this year's spending plans.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think you will have been told that there is considerable concern on the Opposition Benches about a document which has been produced by Conservative and Unionist central office, which contains considerable details about the public expenditure statement.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that this matter has already been raised and that it may be raised again later.

Mr. Madden: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely the Leader of the House should make a statement about who produced the document, when it was circulated, and to whom. Will we receive some information about this, as clearly the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is very reluctant to reveal details of the party political activities of senior Treasury officials?

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has been on his feet for only two minutes. I have had an intimation that this matter may be raised as a point of order later. I think that we should leave it at that.

Mr. MacGregor: That intervention has taken two minutes of my time. For the hon. Gentleman to raise that point in a debate about employment, jobs, and the Government's programme shows how serious he is about these matters. If that is all that the hon. Gentleman can do —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The debate has proceeded in good order until now. I ask the House to give a fair hearing to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, as I should like to deal with the debate and the Government's expenditure programmes, which are extremely important.

The background is that we are now into our sixth successive year of economic growth at an average so far of nearly 3 per cent. per annum. That is the longest period of uninterrupted growth since 1973. The volume of total fixed investments, to which many hon. Members have referred, is at an all-time high and manufacturing investment—and we heard so much about manufacturing investment from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—is up 31 per cent. since the last election. Company profitability is the highest for more than 20 years—almost three times the 1975 level.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: This is the last time that I shall give way.

Mr. Hattersley: I am concerned about the right hon. Gentleman's selective use of figures. He said that manufacturing investment had risen since the election. Will he tell us its relationship with the election when his party became the Government in 1979?

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that there was a deep worldwide recession after 1979, but what actually matters is the progress since then. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would welcome the fact that manufacturing investment is up by 31 per cent. Export volumes—non-oil—rose by 2·5 per cent. in the third quarter of 1986 to an all-time high. It is worth pointing out that there has been no previous five-year period in recent history over which manufacturing has so successfully held its world market share.

Recently, inflation has been at the lowest level for almost 20 years. The lowest on-year inflation rate recorded by the previous Labour Government was higher than any inflation rate since the election. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook suggested that inflation was the only successful indicator of the Government. As I have demonstrated, it is not. But how wrong he would be to downgrade the importance of inflation, as his Government did. It is on the way to a level that is well below any level that the previous Labour Government ever achieved in one year. I tell the right hon. Gentleman that the battle could so easily be lost again, at such damage to our economy and international competitiveness, as it would be under Labour policies.

That is why today the Chancellor put such emphasis on the fact that there would be no relaxation of our fiscal stance in the medium-term financial strategy published at the time of the Budget. It is vital, underpinning all that we set out in our programmes today. As my right hon. Friend said, there can be no question of allowing the projected increases in public expenditure over the next two years to undermine the prudence of the Government's overall fiscal stance.

Equally vital is the continuation of our objective to reduce public expenditure as a proportion of gross national product, which we have succeeded in doing over past years and in the programmes now before the House. The success of the economic strategy, reflected in inflation at levels not seen for almost two decades, and economic growth averaging nearly 3 per cent. for six successive years —that prudent management of the economy—enables us to make further increases in priority services. *[Interruption.]* I want to say a word about them. This debate is about our public expenditure programmes as well. The first point that I should like to make is this. Over the past few years, when we have been succeeding in getting public expenditure down as a proportion of GDP —*[Interruption.]*—we have also succeeded——

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is impossible for us to hear the debate. Only 30 members of the Labour party are present for this important debate, and they are shouting and buffooning —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to hear what the Chief Secretary has to say.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Bray: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall not give way now. I have only a short time left.

As I was saying, over the entire period we have been increasing public expenditure in key priority areas. I now want to say a word about how we are doing it in the plans announced today. We have made a major increase in the current three-year plans in provision for education, for both schools and higher education. The universities are being offered substantial increases in funding in return for their agreement to an approach that embraces a greater emphasis on quality in teaching standards, improved financial management, greater selectivity and some rationalisation. We are providing more for local authorities' capital and current spending on schools.

Funds have also been made available for the city technology college initiative announced recently by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. We have made provision to cover the full costs of the offer on teachers' pay that he announced to the House last week. As he made clear, that offer is tied to terms and conditions of service for the teaching profession which mean that teachers would have enforceable contracts of employment which would specify their professional duties. We believe that that is a fair, reasonable and generous deal for the taxpayer and the ratepayer who will have to find the money and for the teachers.

In the three-year plans, education features most prominently, which demonstrates the Government's commitment to give the education service the resources that it needs. That is what we have been doing throughout, because the amount of education spending per pupil has increased considerably in real terms over recent years.

Let me deal with the next priority area. Our plans provide for a 2·2 per cent. real increase in expenditure on the hospital service next year. That will enable the Health Service to respond to growing needs and an increasing number of patients, with improving services. In addition, the hospital service will retain the full benefit of increasing resources being released through the cost improvement programme.

I have often noticed how little attention the Opposition give to value for money in terms of the use of the taxpayers' pounds. That programme has already achieved £390 million of cumulative savings since 1981-82, plus other improvements in efficiency. In the current year we expect a further £150 million in savings and we expect those savings to continue to accumulate throughout the survey period.

The result is that there are now 75,000 more front-line staff in the Health Service—17 per cent. more than in 1978. As a result of the survey decisions, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has also been able to announce further major initiatives in the Health Service. Capital expenditure on the hospital building programme by the NHS rose by 31 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1985-86. No wonder the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) does not want to know. That is in contrast to the 31 per cent. reduction under the Labour Government.

As my right hon. Friend has announced, over the next three years more than 100 Health Service building schemes, with an estimated value of nearly £700 million, are due to be completed. The total capital programme for the hospital and community health service will increase from about £1 billion this year to £1·2 billion by 1989-90. Health authorities will also retain in full receipts from sales of surplus land and buildings. What a contrast that hospital building programme is with the previous Labour Government's programme.

The same applies to the road programme, which has increased substantially in real terms, and to which we are giving further additional resources this year. Under the previous Labour Government the road programme was slashed in real terms.

We are also planning increased capital investment in housing. We have increased the provision in 1987-88 to honour the commitment given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) in 1984 to local authorities that we would guarantee them 80 per cent. of the 1985-86 allocations. In addition, substantially higher capital receipts from the highly successful programme of the sale of council houses are now forecast throughout the survey period, which will enable greater investment in housing and will allow carefully targeted increases to be made in gross spending on some vital programmes at relatively low cost to the Exchequer. We are targeting additional provision for the renovation of the housing stock through the urban housing renewal unit and are providing for the Housing Corporation to start on private finance schemes to provide additional low-cost housing.

We are also maintaining the priority that we have given throughout our years—an increase of 39 per cent. in real terms—to all issues dealing with law and order; to the police, the prison building programme and in many other ways; for example, in tackling the drugs issue.

Those are particular priorities on top of the priorities which were given to the employment programmes in the Chancellor's Budget, which increased our employment measures by £300 million next year and the year after. I was extremely distressed to hear the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) describe them as "skivvy schemes". The youth training scheme, the community programme and many others are doing beneficial work throughout the community. We are spending about £3,000 million this year on such employment and training measures. It is typical of the hon. Gentleman to say that we are not spending money on employment and then to describe those massive sums as "skivvy schemes".

I wanted to cover many issues where we have achieved much greater value for money for the taxpayer through many measures that we have taken in efficiency scrutinies, competitive tendering, purchasing initiatives and in many other ways. All I can say is that I know that those are always criticised by the Opposition. They do not understand the concept of value for money. They do not understand why we are getting much more in output from our public expenditure programmes than has been achieved before.

Equally, I dismiss the idea that we have been neglecting capital investment. Infrastructure spending is likely to be up by about £1 billion next year on the previous figure of £20 billion. As a result, there are many examples all over the country of very significant capital expenditure programmes. Tonight, alas, I do not have time to deal with them, but I shall do so on another occasion.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East referred to some of the Opposition's employment measures. It was interesting that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook stressed that in all future debates he would concentrate on the Government's policies. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) pointed out, that is no surprise. The right hon. Gentleman wants to avoid people focusing on his policies. It is no wonder that he got such a cheer from behind him. The probing of Labour's policies causes them as much embarrassment as it causes him, but he will not get away with it. It is right that the country should know, just as the national and international business and financial community already knows, just what disarray his policies are in, and what damage they would do to all the things that he spoke about today.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East gave us some idea of which programmes would be dropped from those which I costed in that £28 billion.

Mr. Prescott: We have not decided.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman said that he was committed to a minimum wage. Does he still stick to the policies outlined at a recent Labour party conference, which involved the minimum being two thirds of average wages? We would all like to know the answer. Will the hon. Gentleman say which pledges he intends to drop?

Opposition Members have argued that their so-called poverty programme of £3·6 billion will be covered by taxing the very rich, or top 5 per cent., but that would do considerable damage to many people who will be most surprised to discover that they fall into the category of the very rich. It will also do considerable damage to the economy as a whole and to the wealth creators.

In addition, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East claims that a Labour Government would borrow an additional £6 billion on top of what we are doing in terms of job creation programmes. I have looked at the Southwark programme mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. He said, interestingly enough, that it would form the sort of basis for the local authority programmes that he hopes to encourage—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is certainly moving away from what he said in *The Guardian*. I have read about the Southwark blueprint, but such a programme would mean that the Labour party was claiming to achieve an additional 1 million jobs in two years.

Mr. Prescott: I did not say that. Just in case the Chief Secretary starts on another false trail, I should point out that I said that jobs would come from local authorities, nationalised industries and other industries. We have already begun discussing with local authorities the sorts of plans that we have in mind. That was one discussion yesterday. This is what I said and meant.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman will know that to achieve 1 million jobs over two years—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman does not want to hear, but achieving that over two years would cost another £20 billion. Moreover, it would lead to higher rates for existing businesses, which would destroy jobs. During the next year or so we shall probe just to discover what is the basis of that programme.

We have produced public expenditure plans based on prudent management of the economy which enable us to increase resources in key priority areas. The Labour party's programmes would do enormous damage to jobs, investment and inflation, and that is why we reject the motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 145, Noes 309.

Division No. 310] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Hardy, Peter
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Ashton, Joe	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Heffer, Eric S.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Barnett, Guy	Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Barron, Kevin	Home Robertson, John
Bermingham, Gerald	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Hoyle, Douglas
Blair, Anthony	Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*	Hume, John
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Kennedy, Charles
Buchan, Norman	Kirkwood, Archy
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.	Lambie, David
Campbell, Ian	Lamond, James
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Leadbitter, Ted
Canavan, Dennis	Leighton, Ronald
Cartwright, John	Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Clarke, Thomas	Litherland, Robert
Clay, Robert	Livsey, Richard
Clelland, David Gordon	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Cohen, Harry	Loyden, Edward
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*	McCartney, Hugh
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*	McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Corbett, Robin	MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Corbyn, Jeremy	Maclennan, Robert
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*	McTaggart, Robert
Craigen, J. M.	McWilliam, John
Crowther, Stan	Madden, Max
Cunningham, Dr John	Mallon, Seamus
Dalyell, Tam	Marek, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Deakins, Eric	Martin, Michael
Dewar, Donald	Maxton, John
Dormand, Jack	Meacher, Michael
Douglas, Dick	Michie, William
Dubs, Alfred	Mikardo, Ian
Duffy, A. E. P.	Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Ellis, Raymond	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Nellist, David
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*	Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Fisher, Mark	O'Brien, William
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	Patchett, Terry
Forrester, John	Pavitt, Laurie
Foster, Derek	Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Foulkes, George	Prescott, John
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald	Randall, Stuart
George, Bruce	Raynsford, Nick
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John	Redmond, Martin
Godman, Dr Norman	Richardson, Ms Jo
Golding, Mrs Llin	Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Gould, Bryan	Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*	Rooker, J. W.
Hancock, Michael	Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*

Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Don Dixon

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter

Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the success of its economic policies, which have brought inflation down to its lowest levels for two decades, combined with sustained economic growth, a million new jobs created since 1983, steadily rising living standards, and record levels of investment.

10.14 pm

Mr. Hattersley: Earlier this evening my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) raised a point which affects the rights of hon. Members. I now raise it with you, Mr. Speaker, and, through you, the Leader of the House on a point of order.

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his autumn statement, he told the House that details of the statement would be available to hon. Members when he sat down. He did so at approximately 3·50 pm. Shortly after 5 pm — say, 70 minutes after he sat down — a printed document was found in a telephone booth. The document contained detailed information of the Chancellor's autumn statement and a detailed analysis of that statement. It could not have been produced and printed in one hour and 10 minutes.

When my hon. Friend raised the matter in the debate, the Chancellor, much to my hon. Friend's surprise and mine, rose to give an explanation. He said that the information had been prepared in advance of its being made available to hon. Members, and that it had been prepared by special advisers in the Treasury. I confess that it is not clear to me whether the special advisers were on the Conservative party payroll, who should not have seen the information, or whether they were on the public payroll and should not have been working for the Conservative party. However, what is clear, on the Chancellor's admission, is that before hon. Members received the information a digest was prepared for circulation to Conservative Members and for printing in Conservative Central Office. The Chancellor made that clear in your absence one hour ago, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly the matter affects the rights of every hon. Member. Many of us would regard it as abuse of the information which is at the Chancellor's disposal, not as a party politician but as a Minister. I do not expect the Leader of the House to make a statement on the subject tonight, for I have no doubt that, to protect the rights of hon. Members, he will choose to make inquiries into the matter. I simply tell him that we believe that he will want to make a statement on the subject at 11 am tomorrow. I advise him to confirm that he proposes to do that.

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is barking up the wrong tree. When the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) raised the matter, I replied immediately and gave an explanation. I said that I would double check. Since then I have double checked, and I can say that the story I told was correct. The document was prepared and copied in the Treasury by a special political adviser. The document was paid for by Central Office, which supplied the front cover. It was not released until well after I had sat down. That is a practice of long standing.

Mr. Hattersley: The Chancellor of the Exchequer seems to think that the answer that the document was paid for by Central Office covers everything. Hon. Members who are interested in rights and privileges will not believe that information being paid for by Central Office entitles Central Office to that information before hon. Members. I believe that the Leader of the House, whose honour in this matter I trust absolutely, should consider the position and report to the House on the propriety of it, according to our general custom, tomorrow morning.

Mr. Madden: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The matter is of considerable concern. Earlier this evening, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that there was nothing unusual about the preparation of the document. It contains a great deal of additional information that was not contained in the statement made by the Chancellor at 3.30 pm. It is extremely important that we know the time when the document was circulated and to whom it was circulated. It is clear that the contents of the document could be used for personal gain by those who had advance knowledge of it and received it. It is not good enough for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to attempt to laugh off this matter. The contents of the statement were not available to Members until nearly 4 o'clock, and it is clear that this Conservative Central Office document was available long before that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take further points of order, but I cannot see that there is anything in this matter for me.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the Chancellor of the Exchequer resumed his seat at 3.48 pm. The House heard him say that the document, or a document, would be available at that time. I have no idea what this other document is, and it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the document were in the public domain, why has Conservative Central Office marked it "Confidential"?

Mr. Skinner: On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Chancellor of the Exchequer failed to mention to the House just when the document was made available to those in Conservative Central Office, the people who wanted to read it. You will know, Mr Speaker, that the last important document that was leaked resulted in the issue

[Mr. Skinner]

having to be debated by various Select Committees, and it would be worth while seeing the same procedure take place on this occasion, especially as one in eight of Tory Members is a member of Lloyd's. Half of the Tory Back Benchers represent companies on the stock exchange. With the kind of information that was available in advance to them, they could have made a killing. They could have lined their pockets—*[Laughter.]* This is not a laughing matter. It is all right for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to try to laugh it off, but he is the man who is responsible for doubling the number of people who live in poverty in this country. At the same time he is lining the pockets of others——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a debating point.

Mr. Douglas: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It will be within your knowledge that, although the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not a Budget statement, there were significant tax elements in it, especially on petroleum revenue tax. Therefore—*[Interruption.]* The Chancellor of the Exchequer is interrupting from a sedentary position. We require a statement from him not mutterings from a sedentary position.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to study carefully the *Hansard* report, especially the reply which the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) when he asked a question about Scottish expenditure being lumped with other elements in the statement. He was told—I cannot quote verbatim, and I have not had the opportunity of checking this—by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Cabinet met this morning and that there was no time to apportion Scottish expenditure in a manner that would be apportioned when the autumn statement was fully prepared.

Time is of the essence, Mr. Speaker, and I ask you to try to prevail upon the Leader of the House to accept his responsibilities for the House and to ensure that what the Chancellor of the Exchequer said—that this is not a precedent—is the truth. We have doubts about the authenticity of what the Chancellor is saying about this not being a precedent. Will the Chancellor quote other examples of political advisers in the Treasury behaving in a similar fashion?

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter of the utmost gravity. Conservative hon. Members have had made available to them today not one document but two on this matter. I understand that for some time the Labour party has been trying to persuade us that there are some 4 million people unemployed, rather than nearer 3 million. This document revealed that the Labour party was not prepared to believe that.

At approximately mid-day today, I was photocopying a letter to a constituent, and I read the rules about the photocopier——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is very interesting, but it is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Key: We are dealing with a point of order, Mr. Speaker, on an abuse of this House. I understood that it was an abuse of the House to misuse photocopiers. I have a document here which was revealed to Conservative Members, published, apparently, by Labour Members and headed "Lawson Questions, 6 November 1986". It was a mass distribution to Labour Members of planted questions to the Government. Before they accuse us of receiving one document from an unauthorised source, they had better check their facts with their own Member about the other document.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that this has nothing to do with me as a point of order. These are debating points which should be raised at the proper time, on the Floor of the House, not at this time of night and not through me.

Visas (Fees)

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I draw your attention to a matter on which you have had occasion to comment in the past — the Government's making available information to the press before it is made available to Members of the House. Today, an Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office planted a question with his hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) about an increase in visa fees. The information shows that visa fees are to be increased by 66⅔ per cent. for some people and are to be doubled for others.

That information, Mr. Speaker, has been in the possession of the Government for some considerable time and could have been provided to the House in the debate on visas on Monday of last week. It was deliberately withheld by the Government, and now it has been given in a written answer. But that written answer was made available to the press at 3.30 pm. It was only because the press informed certain hon. Members about it that they know about it, and — this is the important point — would know about it before the House is prorogued and before the next Session commences next week.

This is a deliberate attempt — a piece of sharp practice — by the Government to smother this reprehensible information in a way that will prevent hon. Members from raising it in the House for a considerable time. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to do what you have done in the past, with the appreciation of hon. Members on both sides of the House, and rule that it is not acceptable for the Government to provide information to the press before it is available to hon. Members so that they can raise it on behalf of their constituents.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have no way of knowing whether this was made available in advance to the press. I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. I know that question No. 281 was on the Order Paper today. The answer was given to the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) at 3.30 pm. I am sure that hon. Members have seen this answer, as I have just done, which states that the new fees will come into operation on 18 November. It seems to me that there is adequate time in which to debate this matter.

Mr. Kaufman: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. That is the very point. The whole House has not seen the information. The hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) has seen the information. No other hon. Member had it available to him or her while members of the press had it available to them. Therefore, it was an abuse of the House of Commons to give information to the press when the House as a whole did not have it.

Mr. Speaker: I would certainly deprecate it if the information was given in advance to the press. The whole House knows that written answers are available at 3.30 pm in the Library.

Mr. Kaufman *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: They are. It is a practice which has been going on for many years. I do not see that there is a point of order for me.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since this alleged point of order has been raised so late in the evening, may I point out that what the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who raised the point of order, refers to as the "whole House" is an almost empty House on his side of the Chamber. In other words, his own hon. Friends are not interested in the matter.

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. David Maclean be discharged from the Agriculture Committee. *[Sir Reginald Eyre, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITION

Hypothermia

10.31 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I present a petition from constituents of Islington, North and all other constituencies. It contains the names of some 13,000 petitioners. The signatures were collected by pensioners' organisations, health campaigns, tenants' associations and such groups which believe that deaths through hypothermia are an insult to a civilised society. They are concerned that in the forthcoming winter there will be further deaths from hypothermia in our so-called civilised society.

The petition calls for a substantial increase in old-age pensions. It states that pensioner households should not be forced to pay standing charges for their gas and electricity and, above all, should have their supplies guaranteed so that they do not face the indignity of having their fuel supplies cut off, with a consequent danger to health and death from hypothermia.

The petitioners pray:

that the honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for Health and Social Services to put into law the Pensoners' Right to Heat, Light and Communications Bill to protect pensioners from fear of cold homes every winter.

The petition is signed by some 13,000 people, many of them elderly—many are over 80—who have written to me in support of their demands for urgent action by the House before prorogation to protect them in the forthcoming winter.

To lie upon the Table.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

10.34 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): Earlier this week the third follow-up meeting of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe – the so-called Helsinki process – opened in Vienna. It takes place against a very different background from its two predecessors.

The first review conference in Belgrade in 1977 and 1978 represented a great disappointment to those participating states which had hoped to see some progress in the two years following the euphoric signing of the Helsinki Final Act. It dashed the hopes of those in Communist Europe who were monitoring the implementation of the humanitarian provisions of the Act in the courageous but naive expectation that they would enjoy a degree of international protection for so doing.

It contributed to the growing realisation on the part of the free world that detente was proving to be a one-way street for the Soviet Union, which was seizing all the advantages of trade, credit and technology transfer while delivering nothing on the human rights issues spelled out in the Final Act. It was also, we now know, taking advantage of the spirit of detente to build up its own offensive capabilities, while we in the West were doing precisely the reverse.

The second review conference in Madrid in 1982 and 1983 took place against a background of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the imposition of martial law in Poland, continued repression in eastern Europe, and, during the course of it, the shooting down by the Soviet Union of the South Korean airliner.

Despite such a deterioration in East-West relations, it was perhaps both surprising and encouraging that the concluding document at Madrid added to the original Helsinki commitments and provided for a series of subsidiary meetings on confidence-building measures, the peaceful settlement of disputes, human rights, and human contacts and scientific and cultural co-operation. By contrast, the Vienna conference this week begins with a far more encouraging background.

Last year in Helsinki at the tenth anniversary meeting of the signing of the Final Act all 35 Foreign Ministers recommitted themselves to full implementation of the Act. The confidence-building measures arrived at in Stockholm represent an encouraging step forward in verification through on-site inspection, which could well contribute to other arms control negotiations.

General Secretary Gorbachev is giving all the appearance of a new broom following the moribund Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko years. There is a more public Soviet perception of its immense economic problems which a significant reduction in defence expenditure and Western technological aid can help to reduce, although, as we all know, only a free economy will deliver the goods to the Russian people as it has to ours. We are in the middle of summitry. Geneva — followed by Reykjavik and Washington — hopefully in the new year — may yet lead to meaningful reductions in arms before President Reagan retires to go down in history as one of his country's greatest Presidents.

All this augurs well for Vienna but only at first sight, because we must never allow ourselves to ignore the formidable realities and challenges that remain. There is, as yet, absolutely no evidence that the new leadership in the Kremlin is any different from that which so cruelly and effectively put an end to the Hungarian attempt at neutrality and political pluralism exactly 30 years ago, or indeed the Prague spring in 1968. Perhaps Vienna as a venue, just a few miles down the road from both Budapest and Prague, will remind all those participating there that these were the same roads taken by thousands of Hungarians and Czechoslovakians seeking refuge and freedom from Soviet domination. Nor is there any real evidence that the Soviet Union is to withdraw from Afghanistan, and I regret that the European Community is resuming those negotiations with Comecon which it broke off six years ago because of Afghanistan. What has changed?

The treatment of the Soviet Union's so-called dissidents has not improved. Police brutality, harsh treatment in labour camps, abuse of psychiatry – the case of Serajim Yevsyokov is particularly tragic – a wide variety of punishments and pressures, harassment and discrimination – in reality apartheid – remain the norm for anyone seeking true freedom of expression, assembly, unions or worship. Indeed, if anything, pressure on dissidents has intensified under Gorbachev. There is a practice – now commonplace – of re-sentencing dissidents while still serving sentences. That is surely contrary to natural justice. Conditions in penal establishments are deteriorating, and new laws against contact with foreigners and receiving gifts from abroad have been introduced contrary to the spirit of Helsinki.

As the whole world knows, one crude measure of repression is the number of Jewish refusniks denied exit visas and of the growing number of Christians who, like the Siberian Seven, are seeking to leave for countries where they may bring up their families in a religious manner free of state interference. It has been no different in every other eastern European Communist country.

In Poland, while we must but welcome the release of political prisoners, there is no relaxation of party control despite the clear support of the majority of its people for both Solidarity and the Church. In East Germany the number of political prisoners has reached 7,000 and the Federal Republic pays immense sums to purchase their freedom. In Czechoslovakia, in addition to the continual persecution of the Charter 77 campaigners, in recent weeks the authorities have called in some 300 young members of the so-called Jazz Section, an independent group which publishes books and music. In Bulgaria the entire Turkish population is being forcibly subjected to a total loss of their ethnic identity. In Rumania repression against religion continues unabated. Churches in Bucharest and elsewhere have been deliberately demolished to make way for housing blocks.

Last month I visited for the second time the Second Baptist Church in Oradea, in north-west Rumania, which holds 1,000 people, where Pastors Nichole Gheorghita and Paul Negrut have built up a congregation of more than 2,500 people at every service, and where last year the authorities withdrew their original permission for them to rebuild a larger church to hold 2,200 people on a new site.

[Mr. David Atkinson]

Now the old church is deteriorating and will collapse because of the way the drainage from the surrounding development has been laid.

I mention the Second Baptist Church in Oradea in particular because it was the present Romanian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Ilonne Totu — who is to visit London shortly for consultations — who was the official on the Central Council of the Romanian Communist party who was responsible for granting the original approval for the new larger church to be built, and which has since been withdrawn after his promotion. Perhaps my hon. Friend will ensure that this matter is raised with him when he comes to Britain.

Nor should we be fooled by the release recently of a number of well-known campaigners for human rights on whose behalf the free world has been campaigning, such as Shcharansky, Orlov and Father Calcui from Romania. While their release proves that perseverance on behalf of those whose names have thus become internationally known can succeed, if only to be exchanged for spies or as pawns in pre-summit propaganda, there are so many more who remain, like Sakharov, Father Gleb Yakunin and Lev Rengelson — of the Moscow Committee for the Defence of Religious Rights — like Valerie Sendarov and Ratislov Endikomov — the free trade union campaigners and even Irana Ratsushinskaya, the Christian poetess, who though released this autumn is being denied a visa to obtain hospital treatment in Britain, and many thousands of prisoners of conscience whose names we do not know, as my right hon. and learned Friend said in Vienna on Tuesday.

Of course, we must hope that in time internal developments in all these countries will one day lead to the establishment of that pluralist democracy which we know offers the best guarantee of human rights and an end to the separation of Europe between freedom and slavery. In the meantime, it is the Helsinki process which offers the best and only peaceful way forward and it is in that realistic spirit which I know the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues will be negotiating at Vienna. They will, I hope, be pursuing balanced progress in all areas of existing agreements of the Final Act before any new commitments can be entered into.

There are a number of positive steps which I hope will be considered at Vienna, which I want to put to the House on behalf of the three organisations with which I and several other hon. Members are associated: the International Society of Human Rights, the Inter-Parliamentary Group for Human Rights in the Soviet Union, and Christian Solidarity International.

First, Western participating states should ensure that a detailed report of all known previous violations of the conditions contained in principles VII and VIII as well as basket III should be presented. They should emphasise that the Final Act constitutes one entity. Those who violate the humanitarian conditions of basket III cannot expect to obtain advantages from the economic, scientific and technological co-operation suggested in basket II. Secondly, they should seek to construct a human rights commission and court of justice for the CSCE signatory states. In that way, the right of individual petition for citizens to voice complaints can be protected. Thirdly, they should agree a charter for humanitarian aid which will guarantee every citizen the right to receive and provide such aid, which is currently denied in several states.

Fourthly, they should pass a declaration of the right of every citizen to supervise the observance of the Helsinki agreements and to form monitoring groups operating free of state interference. Fifthly, they should call for an experts conference concerning the question of movement and family reunification. Finally, they should call for an experts conference on ethnic minorities and a charter of rights for such minorities in CSCE participating states.

I think the whole House will agree that we who are fortunate enough to belong to one of the minority of nations in the world which enjoy true freedom and democracy have a moral obligation to raise our voices on behalf of those who do not. Standing up for human rights does not represent intervention in the internal affairs of other states. It is indeed provided for by the very principles of the Final Act without which real and lasting peace, security and co-operation are not possible. That is what I know my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues are doing in Vienna at the present time, and the whole House will want to wish them every success.

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): The House will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) for raising this matter and to you, Mr. Speaker, for selecting this subject for debate.

As my hon. Friend said, the third conference on security and co-operation in Europe follow-up meeting opened in Vienna on 4 November. This is therefore a timely opportunity to discuss the Government's approach to the CSCE process.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has just returned from Vienna, where he spoke on behalf of the 12 nations of the European Community. A copy of his speech has been placed in the Library.

My right hon. and learned Friend stated in his speech that in the CSCE process we aim to reduce tension and put an end to conflict, to release new forces for co-operation, and to respect both national and individual rights. He said:

> "The Twelve believe that the Final Act can be a force for good and a force for change in European and East-West relations. If all 35 countries who signed the Final Act implemented its principles the political atmosphere would be transformed, and not only in Europe. Mutual mistrust would give way to mutual confidence. Uncertainty and insecurity would give way to security. Anxiety would give way to optimism".

We are realists. We do not expect such ambitious results to be achieved overnight. Vienna is only one step in a long process of building confidence between East and West, but it is an important one which gives opportunities which must not be missed.

First and foremost, Vienna is an opportunity to take stock of the achievements of the Helsinki process and to review the implementation of the commitments entered into by 35 countries. Secondly, it is an opportunity to look for new ways of ensuring that those commitments are better carried out, and for new areas of East-West co-operation.

Superficially, there sometimes seems to be a tension between these various aspects. Reviewing implementation of commitments means exposing the failure of the Soviet Union and some Eastern European countries to treat their citizens humanely. The Soviet Union used to say that such exposure was unwarranted interference in internal affairs, which contradicted the search for new ways of co-operation.

In reality, of course, there is no contradiction, for greater East-West confidence, and better co-operation, can come about only against a background of frankness and truth in acknowledging where commitments are not being honoured. In the past few years, even the Soviet authorities have come to accept that human rights and humanitarian questions are a proper subject for international discussion.

Readiness to discuss is one thing; readiness to improve respect for human rights across the board is another. We are unfortunately still a long way away from that. The release by the Soviet Union of Anatoly Shcharansky, Yuri Orlov and others is very welcome, but it is not nearly enough.

We must not forget the continued existence of that unnecessary monstrosity, the Berlin wall, the enormous number of German, Jewish, Turkish and other ethnic would-be emigrants from Warsaw pact countries, the systematic wasteful jamming of western broadcasts to the east, the recent cri de coeur from individuals in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and Poland on the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution and the continuing Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Nor must we forget those many individuals of differing creeds in the Soviet Union who are persecuted merely for seeking freedom of religious expression. Those are things the whole House will want to recollect. That is the reality of life behind the iron curtain.

Those are issues which Ministers and officials raise regularly with the Soviet and East European authorities in the CSCE framework and bilaterally. Recently my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary raised our concern over Soviet human rights abuses when he met the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Shevardnadze, in Vienna. The Vienna meeting offers the opportunity patiently to press the Soviet Union and other East European countries to act more humanely. Change, when it comes, will largely be internally generated. However, we can help that process by reminding those countries of the standards to which they subscribed at Helsinki, by continuing to press for improvement and by showing that our concern is wholly compatible with the contacts and dialogue we want to encourage between East and West.

The meeting starts with fair omens. At the preparatory meeting, which settled the arrangements and agenda, we and our partners and allies obtained some modest improvements on previous meetings. There will be a rather longer period for reviewing implementation of existing commitments. Since that review is at the heart of the meeting, we welcome it. Rather more sessions will be open to journalists and others. That too is welcome. Another good omen is the recent successful conclusion of the CDE Stockholm agreement on confidence and security building measures.

The Vienna meeting will start with a review of implementation, or stocktaking, which will last into the new year. I have said enough to show that we attach priority to this part of the proceedings, and want to see a full and thorough debate which does not gloss over the shortcomings of the Soviet Union and East European countries in human rights and contacts.

But the CSCE process ranges much more widely than human rights. It is a conference on security and co-operation in Europe. The Government's aim is to maintain a balance between all elements of the process. This means maintaining or restoring momentum in each of the three CSCE baskets. I will remind the House that basket I deals with basic principles, including human rights and security, basket II concentrates on economic co-operation, science and technology and the environment, and basket III concentrates on human contacts, information, culture and education.

We will aim at Vienna to reaffirm the West's long-standing view that these areas are linked, and that detente — for want of a better word — is indivisible and not susceptible to partial interpretation in terms of subject or geographical area. We will go on to stress that security cannot be divorced from the political, economic and human aspects of relations between states. Confidence and mutual trust cannot develop properly against a background of repression of human rights. When the conference goes on to consider new proposals for developing the CSCE process, our priorities will be in the areas where performance falls furthest behind commitments – military security, human rights and information.

Let me first deal with security. The Stockholm agreement is a major CSCE achievement. If implemented thoroughly — we will insist on that — it will be an important contribution towards greater openness about military activities in Europe. By establishing detailed provisions for on-site inspection, including on Soviet territory, the agreement breaks new ground. It shows that progress can be made in arms control negotations with the Soviet Union provided we are clear about our objectives.

The Stockholm agreement — the details of which will be familiar to the House — represents a significant achievement for the United Kingdom. Our delegation played a major role in the negotiation, particularly in the crucial discussions on verification. The excellent co-ordination with our partners and allies was an essential condition of success.

The task now is to build on this achievement. The Vienna meeting must help find ways to do this. We and our allies are currently considering the way forward in the NATO high level task force set up — at Franco-British initiative – by Foreign Ministers at Halifax in May. We intend that their final report in December will set the broad lines of the allied approach when discussion resumes at Vienna in the new year. There is clearly scope for further work on measures to increase confidence and stability. But we must also keep in mind our objective of working towards reductions leading to parity at lower levels of conventional forces in Europe. We hope, and will continue to insist, that the Stockholm agreement should now be matched by progress in the mutual and balanced force reductions talks at Vienna, where the major Western proposal — again initiated by Britain — of December last still requires a substantial response from the Warsaw pact.

In the vital "human dimension" of the CSCE process, Vienna must build on the discussions of those specialised meetings since Madrid which did not produce final documents. We will take the Western proposals tabled at the Ottawa human rights meeting, the Budapest cultural forum and the Berne experts meeting on human contacts

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

as our starting point in considering new texts on which we might agree. We also see value in the possibility of an experts meeting on information after Vienna. This is an important aspect of the Final Act which has been rather neglected since Madrid. I can think of no better venue for such a meeting than London, with its tradition of vigorous and free journalism and broadcasting.

The CSCE is about people, and their values, it is about individuals. We are regularly asked to raise individual cases in CSCE meetings. My hon. Friend has mentioned several examples of these—and five proposals—of which I have taken careful note. I will ensure that his comments are passed to the head of the United Kingdom CSCE delegation, Mr. Laurence O'Keeffe. I assure my hon. Friend that we share the concerns expressed and take parliamentary and public views into account when considering which matters to raise.

We do not always raise all the cases brought to our attention in plenary meetings. Sometimes we decide quite deliberately to raise such matters in private, bilateral sessions. There is, after all, a place for quiet, not megaphone, diplomacy.

For long-standing and well-understood reasons, we cannot commit ourselves to raising particular cases on specific occasions, but we recognise our obligation to the individuals concerned; and we will always be alive to opportunities to help them. We will ensure that the problems that their cases represent are fully and fairly addressed at Vienna.

The Government will maintain pressure at Vienna on the Soviet Union and East European countries to improve the lives of the people of Europe. This is an essential factor in maintaining public support for the CSCE process—a process which we believe lies at the very core of East-West relations.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 7 November 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

9.35 am
Sitting suspended—

9.41 am
Message to attend the Lords Commissioners:
The House went — and, having returned:

Royal Assent

10.12 am

Mr. Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that the House has been to the House of Peers where a Commission under the Great Seal was read, authorising the Royal Assent to the following Acts and Measure:

1. Family Law Act 1986
2. Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986
3. Public Trustee and Administration of Funds Act 1986
4. European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986
5. Sex Discrimination Act 1986
6. Financial Services Act 1986
7. Education (No. 2) Act 1986
8. Salmon Act 1986
9. Housing and Planning Act 1986
10. Public Order Act 1986
11. Housing (Scotland) Act 1986
12. National Health Service (Amendment) Act 1986
13. Milford Haven Port Authority Act 1986
14. Blyth Harbour Act 1986
15. Great Yarmouth Outer Harbour Act 1986
16. Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure 1986

Prorogation

Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech

Mr. Speaker: I have further to acquaint the House that the Lord High Chancellor, one of the High Commissioners, delivered Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech to both Houses of Parliament, in pursuance of Her Majesty's Command. For greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy and also directed that the terms of the Speech be printed in the Votes and Proceedings. Copies are being made available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

The Duke of Edinburgh and I were pleased to receive the State Visits of His Highness the Amir of Qatar in November, their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain in April, and the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and Freifrau von Weizsaecker in July.

We recall with great pleasure the State Visit to Nepal followed by visits to New Zealand and Australia earlier this year, as well as the recent State Visit to the People's Republic of China and the visit to Hong Kong.

My Government have attached great importance to relations with countries in the Far East. This was marked by the Prime Minister's visit to the Republic of Korea in May and by visits here of the President of the Republic of Korea in April and the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in June.

My Government and the Chinese Government have made good progress in carrying out the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong.

My Government have enhanced the United Kingdom's defences and played a full part in the Atlantic Alliance. My Government have worked vigorously for balanced and verifiable agreements on arms control in respect of nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons, keeping in close consultation with the United Kingdom's allies. They were active at the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament in Europe which reached agreement in September. They have continued to seek improved relations with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe.

My Government have assumed the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Community. My Government signed the Single European Act to amend the Treaty of Rome and legislation to give effect to it has been passed.

My Government have worked to bring about peaceful and fundamental change in South Africa in consultation with their partners in the European Community and with the Commonwealth. They have supported efforts to restore the independence and non-aligned status of Afghanistan and Cambodia. My Government have honoured their commitments to the people of the Falkland Islands, while continuing to seek more normal relations with Argentina.

My Government welcomed the resolution adopted at the United Nations Special Session on Africa concerning the economic recovery and development of African countries. They have provided substantial emergency assistance to victims of famine in Africa, both directly and through the European Community.

[Mr. Speaker]

My Government have worked hard for the launching of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. They welcome this initiative believing that a successful outcome to the negotiations will preserve and strengthen the world's open trading system.

My Government have made vigorous efforts to combat international terrorism and trafficking in drugs.

My Government have signed a treaty with the Government of France for a Channel Tunnel to be financed by private capital. Legislation has been introduced to enable the treaty to be ratified.

My Government and the Governments of the Cayman Islands and the United States of America have signed a treaty relating to mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. My Government have introduced measures for the better administration of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Members of the House of Commons

I thank you for the provision which you have made for the honour and dignity of the Crown and for the Public Service.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government's policies have been successful in reducing inflation to levels not seen for almost 20 years. The output of the nation continues to expand and the number of people in work continues to grow.

In order to give more help to the unemployed, my Government have through the Wages Act removed some outdated obstacles to the creation on new jobs and have expanded existing employment and training measures including the introduction of the national Restart programme for the long term unemployed and the expansion of the Community Programme and the Enterprise Allowance Scheme. The "Action for Jobs" information campaign has been introduced to ensure that employers, employees and unemployed people know what help is available to them.

My Government continue to attach the highest importance to the education and training of young people and to improving the links between school and work. The new two year Youth Training Scheme was launched successfully and the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative has been expanded to a nationwide programme offering the opportunity of participation to all those between 14 and 18 years of age at school.

My Government have taken additional initiatives to encourage enterprise and improve the performance of the economy. The basic rate of income tax has been further reduced.

Continuing my Government's programme of encouraging greater industrial efficiency and promoting wider share ownership, legislation has been enacted to provide for the setting up of new regulatory arrangements for the gas supply and airports industries and for the sale of shares in British Gas and the British Airports Authority to the public. An Act was also passed to enable the Atomic Energy Authority to operate as a trading fund from 1 April 1986 with a capital structure and borrowing powers. The remaining warship yards of British Shipbuilders have been sold as have my Government's residual shares in Cable and Wireless. The National Bus Company has begun to sell its undertakings to the private sector including sales to managers and employees.

An Act has been passed to enable building societies to increase the range of services offered to the public and to provide a new statutory framework for their supervision.

Legislation has been passed to extend and reform the regulation of investment business. This will protect the interest of investors while encouraging the continued development of strong, efficient and competitive financial services.

Legislation has been enacted to improve the management of schools in England and Wales and to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers.

An Act has been passed giving further effect to my Government's policies towards agriculture and the countryside.

Legislation has been passed to encourage the sale of publicly owned flats to their tenants and the wider involvement of private business in the ownership and management of council housing, and to improve the planning system.

Legislation has been enacted to prohibit expenditure on party political publicity by local authorities and to require local authorities to make a rate by 1 April each year.

An Act has been passed to reform social security.

In Northern Ireland, the security forces have continued the fight against terrorism with courage and dedication. My Government has entered into an Agreement with the Government of the Republic of Ireland which it believes can benefit all the people of Northern Ireland and help achieve greater peace and stability.

For Scotland, measures have been passed to extend the rights of public sector tenants, facilitate the private ownership of public sector housing and improve the building control system, and to improve legal aid arrangements.

Further progress has been made in the consolidation of statute law. Legislation has been passed for England and Wales to set fair time limits for cases involving latent damage; provision has been made to settle conflicts of law relating to child abduction within the United Kingdom, and to reform the law of land registration and the administration of funds by the Public Trustee and other authorities.

An Act has been passed to enable the courts in England and Wales to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking, and to penalise those who assist traffickers to retain the benefit of such proceeds.

An Act has been passed to reform the law relating to public order.

Legislation has been enacted to establish improved arrangements for the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes.

An Act has been passed to modify and extend the management structure of salmon fisheries in Scotland and to introduce further measures to prevent illegal fishing in Great Britain.

Proposals have been made to extend the account ability of local authorities and for other reforms in the finance of local government.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may attend you.

After which the Lord Chancellor said:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

By virtue of Her Majesty's Commission which has been now read we do, in Her Majesty's name, and in obedience to Her Majesty's Commands, prorogue this Parliament to Wednesday the twelfth day of this instant November, to be then here holden and this Parliament is accordingly prorogued to Wednesday the twelfth day of this instant November.

End of the Third Session (opened on 6 November 1985) of the Forty-Ninth Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in the Thirty-Fifth Year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 27 October 1986

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

A and O-level Passes

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of pupils with five or more O-levels or O-level equivalent remaining in full-time education in each local education authority and in England as a whole.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in the form requested. The proportions of maintained school leavers in England with five or more higher grades at O-level/CSE who had either stayed on at school or who had left at the minimum school leaving age, intending to continue full-time education elsewhere, are shown in the table. The percentages do not include those pupils who left school without five or more higher grade O-level/CSE passes and subsequently achieved this level of qualification in full-time education or otherwise but do include those who achieved this level of qualification at least in part in the sixth form.

Leavers from maintained schools in England with 5 or more higher grade[1] passes at O level or CSE
Total of leavers aged 15 who intended to pursue full-time courses of further education and leavers aged 16 or over as a percentage of all leavers with 5 or more higher grade[1] passes at O level or CSE
Data averaged over the academic years 1982-83 to 1984-85

Local Education Authority	*Percentage*
Barking	80·0
Barnet	93·9
Bexley	88·3
Brent	96·6
Bromley	88·5
Croydon	91·3
Ealing	92·5
Enfield	89·2
Haringey	89·5
Harrow	93·8
Havering	87·5
Hillingdon	89·9
Hounslow	90·2
Kingston-upon-Thames	93·4
Merton	93·2
Newham	85·7
Redbridge	87·8
Richmond-upon-Thames	92·8
Sutton	90·4
Waltham Forest	95·6
ILEA	91·0
Birmingham	85·8
Coventry	85·6
Dudley	80·7
Sandwell	81·7
Solihull	89·2
Walsall	87·2
Wolverhampton	86·0
Knowsley	82·5
Liverpool	90·9
St. Helens	80·7
Sefton	89·7
Wirral	88·1
Bolton	83·0
Bury	84·3
Manchester	89·8
Oldham	78·3
Rochdale	78·1
Salford	79·9
Stockport	84·1
Tameside	77·2
Trafford	80·2
Wigan	81·4
Barnsley	83·3
Doncaster	86·7
Rotherham	78·2
Sheffield	87·2
Bradford	90·4
Calderdale	91·1
Kirklees	89·5
Leeds	86·9
Wakefield	83·7
Gateshead	85·8
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	90·3
North Tyneside	87·7
South Tyneside	89·9
Sunderland	81·4
Avon	86·0
Bedfordshire	85·8
Berkshire	89·1
Buckinghamshire	91·1
Cambridgeshire	88·1
Cheshire	87·7
Cleveland	83·2
Cornwall	93·7
Cumbria	81·0
Derbyshire	84·5
Devon	87·4
Dorset	89·0
Durham	86·3
East Sussex	90·1
Essex	85·7
Gloucestershire	86·5
Hampshire	89·2
Hereford and Worcester	88·6
Hertfordshire	92·0
Humberside	84·9
Isle of Wight	96·5
Kent	92·6
Lancashire	82·4
Leicestershire	91·6
Lincolnshire	89·7
Norfolk	86·7
North Yorkshire	90·9
Northamptonshire	84·9
Northumberland	90·8
Nottinghamshire	85·2
Oxfordshire	89·7
Shropshire	89·0
Somerset	85·4
Staffordshire	83·3
Suffolk	83·4
Surrey	92·3
Warwickshire	87·8
West Sussex	92·2
Wiltshire	87·6
TOTAL ENGLAND	87·7

[1] O level grades A to C, CSE grade 1.
Source: School leavers survey. Data subject to sampling error.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any representations to date from the teacher unions concerning city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has not received any such representations. Copies of the booklet on city technology colleges were sent to the teacher unions, and some have subsequently been in contact with the Department. My right hon. Friend and I believe that the teacher unions will wish to give this initiative careful consideration. We would be happy to discuss this with them, if they so wish.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what differences in social composition he expects as between pupils participating in *(a)* the assisted places scheme and *(b)* the city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: The assisted places scheme is a national programme designed to be academically selective. It extends the opportunities for children from poorer backgrounds to enjoy the best of the secondary education in the independent sector. While the Department does not collect information on the social background of APS pupils, the sole aim of the scheme is to support those pupils who could not otherwise afford to take up a fee-paying place.

In contrast, city technology colleges are designed to offer a demanding education to pupils of varying backgrounds in a number of our cities. Selection will be by aptitude and commitment, and not through formal tests of academic ability. CTCs will be required to admit pupils representative of the community they serve.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what effects the establishment of city technology colleges will have on the availability of science and technology teachers in the neighbouring maintained schools; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: City technology colleges will plainly reinforce the overall demand for science and technology teachers, without automatically guaranteeing an increase in supply. The effects in specific areas will depend on local circumstances, including the methods of staff recruitment used by CTC governing bodies, and the pay and conditions they offer. The Government believe that CTCs stand a good chance of attracting back into the profession teachers who have left it, and of stimulating new entrants.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to allow the establishment of city technology colleges in the same localities and affecting the same catchment areas as schools operating the technical and vocational education initiative; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The list of possible locations for city technology colleges includes a number of areas served by schools participating in the technical and vocational education initiative. In such areas, CTCs will complement the TVEI and will be expected to build on its achievements.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the governing bodies of the proposed city technology colleges will have elected parent representatives amongst their number.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has made it clear that a major criterion in the selection of pupils for city technology colleges will be the commitment of their parents to full-time education or training up to the age of 18, to the distinctive characteristics of the CTC curriculum, and to the ethos of the CTC. Against this background, my right hon. Friend will be discussing the possibility of direct parental representation on the governing bodies with the promoters, who will have the controlling interest in them.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate his Department has made of the likely effect on technical and vocational education initiative schemes of the proposed city technology colleges; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: City technology colleges will offer some parents and children an alternative to maintained schools in their catchment areas. CTCs will not affect the planned extension of the TVEI and existing TVEI schools will continue to benefit under arrangements which have already been made. More generally, my right hon. Friend expects city technology colleges to provide new models for improving the quality of education in urban areas.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to compulsorily purchase local education authority land and buildings for use as city technology college.. and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Private promoters will be responsible for finding and managing the premises used by city technology colleges. My right hon. Friend has no powers of compulsory purchase.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he proposes to ensure that entrants to city technology colleges will fully reflect the catchment area from which they are drawn.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend proposes to make it a condition of grant to the promoters of city technology colleges that they aim to secure an intake of pupils which is representative of the community they serve. The precise arrangements will be negotiated case by case.

Pupils (Statistics)

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils there are in England in *(a)* county schools, *(b)* voluntary-controlled schools and *(c)* voluntary-aided schools.

Mr. Dunn: The number of full and part-time pupils in England in January 1986 in county schools, voluntary controlled schools and voluntary-aided schools are as follows:

	Number
County schools	5,524,672
Voluntary controlled schools	529,107
Voluntary aided schools	1,039,883
Total	7,093,662

Single-sex Education

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer of 8 July

to the hon. Member for Epping Forest, if he will make a statement on his policy towards the proposed reorganisation of secondary education in the Epping Forest area, in the light of his Department's circular 4/82 concerning the maintenance of opportunities for single-sex education in schools.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is currently considering statutory proposals for the reorganisation of secondary and further education in the west Essex area. His policy in respect of single-sex schooling remains as set out in my reply to my hon. Friend on 8 July 1986 at column *142*.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Walden: I regret that my visit to the university of Liverpool planned for 22 October had to be postponed because of parliamentary business. I hope to rearrange my visit for next term.

University of Wales

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the percentage changes in real terms in funding of the colleges of the University of Wales by the University Grants Committee over the period 1981-82 to 1986-87, including those amounts representing compensation for redundancy and early retirement, provision for capital in recurrent expenditure and local authority rates.

Mr. Walden: The percentage changes in real terms in funding of the colleges of the university of Wales by the University Grants Committee over the period 1981-82 to 1985-86, including those amounts representing compensation for redundancy and early retirement, provision for capital in recurrent expenditure and local authority rates is shown in the following table. Information for the 1986-87 academic year cannot be provided as total grant for that year cannot be finalised until the first instalment of the rates bill for the 1987-88 financial year is known.

Percentage funding changes in real terms

	1981-82 to 1982-83	*1982-83 to 1983-84*	*1983-84 to 1984-85*	*1984-85 to 1985-86*	*1981-82 to 1985-86*
Aberystwyth UC	+11·4	+2·6	−2·8	−5·0	+5·5
Bangor UC	+11·4	−9·2	+5·1	−7·1	−1·2
Cardiff UC	+15·6	−0·2	+12·3	−13·9	+11·6
St. David's Lampeter	+45·5	+0·5	−16·9	−1·7	+19·6
Swansea UC	+4·2	−2·1	−1·3	+2·8	+3·5
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	+12·1	−4·6	−6·8	−5·9	−6·1
Welsh National School of Medicine	+7·7	−3·3	−1·5	+0·4	+3·1

Pupil Teacher Ratio

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state, for the United Kingdom, England and Wales, the south-west standard region, and Cornwall, the average teacher-pupil ratio in both primary and secondary schools and the average amount spent per pupil in respect of providing this education in the primary and secondary sectors and the corresponding figures for the academic year 1978-79.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratio and the average amount spent per pupil in maintained primary and secondary schools in England, the South West and Cornwall and the corresponding figures for 1978-79 are as follows:

Pupil teacher ratios within schools

	January 1986		*January 1979*	
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*
England	22·1	15·9	23·1	16·7
South West	23·6	16·8	24·0	17·5
Cornwall	23·5	16·6	24·2	16·8

Net institutional expenditure per pupil (£ in 1984-85 real terms)[1]

	1984-85		*1978-79*	
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*
England	760	1,085	650	945
South West	695	1,000	605	880
Cornwall	670	965	575	875

[1]The cash figures for 1978-79 have been repriced to 1984-85 using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator.

Information for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Royal Greenwich Observatory

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what scientific and non-scientific criteria were taking into account in deciding to relocate the royal Greenwich observatory in Cambridge; what estimate was made of the cost of relocation in Manchester or Merseyside; and if he will reconsider the relocation to Manchester or Merseyside.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Science and Engineering Research Council took account of the scientific need to associate the royal Greenwich observatory with a university having the following facilities: a strong astronomy department including an active optical observing group, expertise which complements that of the RGO, single site astronomy facilities, and associated strengths in engineering, computing and communications. The council also took account of non-scientific criteria, including cost and, equally important, the potential of the various sites for providing RGO with suitable accommodation.

The net cost after five years of the move to Manchester, taking both capital and recurrent costs and savings into account, was estimated to be: for the option using a refurbished existing building, nil; for the option using a new building, £0·7 million. The first of these two options however had the disadvantage of housing RGO on two sites separated by a main thoroughfare.

My right hon. Friend is considering the formal request by the SERC for approval in principle of the capital expenditure required for relocating the RGO at Cambridge.

EC Students

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about payment of fees by students from other European Community countries.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July c. *475-476*]: In my reply to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 1 July I said that the new arrangements for payment of course fees for those European Community nationals studying here on courses designated for mandatory awards purposes would apply to nationals of "other" European Community countries. The arrangements will in fact apply to the nationals of all European Community countries including United Kingdom nationals, and the children of such nationals, who meet the relevant criteria for eligibility, including that of ordinary residence in the Community area. The conditions for eligibility and other details of how the arrangements operate are set out in a letter of guidance (further education circular letter 2/86) to education institutions and other interested parties on 16 October. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales which jobcentres in Wales are managed by Welsh-speaking managers; and which have staff who are Welsh-speaking but managers who are not.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: At 22 October 1986, the 23 jobcentres or jobcentre groups in Wales managed by Welsh speakers, were those at Blackwood, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Caernarfon, Cardiff, Carmarthen, Holyhead, Lampeter, Llandyssul, Llanelli, Llangefni, Machynlleth, Maesteg, Mold, Newbridge, Newtown, Penarth, Pontardawe, Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Treorchy, Welshpool, Ystrad Mynach and Ystradgynlais.

The further 11 jobcentres with staff who were Welsh-speaking but managers who were not were at Ammanford, Bangor, Cardigan, Milford Haven, Morriston, Neath, Newport, Port Talbot, Shotton, Swansea and Wrexham.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy regarding the consideration of the effect of planning decisions on the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is a requirement on local planning authorities in considering planning applications and on the Secretary of State and his inspectors in considering planning appeals that they have regard to all material considerations. Policies which reflect the needs and the interests of the Welsh language may properly be among those considerations.

Housing (Marital Breakdown)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what research his Department has conducted into the housing implications of marital breakdown.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Welsh Office receives information on the incidence of homelessness caused by disputes between spouses/cohabitees from local authorities in Wales. This information is published in "Welsh Housing Statistics", the latest edition of which contains data for 1985. A copy of this is in the Library. The Government is considering proposals to carry out comprehensive research into the housing implications of relationship breakdown in England and Wales.

Loan Companies

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will request local authorities to take steps to prevent private loan companies from operating on their housing estates to pressurise tenants into taking out loans with them to exercise their right to buy their houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No. Council tenants with the right to buy their homes must be allowed to take their own decisions about whether to do so and how to finance the purchase. They have the right to a mortgage from their landlord, subject to an income test, and, if they cannot afford to buy their homes outright, the option of purchase on shared ownership terms.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Terrorism

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the review of the cases of those who were sentenced for the Birmingham and Guildford pub bombings; and what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Since the beginning of July my right hon. Friend has received about 170 letters, including some 50 from right hon. and hon. Members and several from religious leaders about these two cases. Some letters refer, in addition, to the Maguire case. My right hon. Friend and I have also met a parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Ireland. We have assured all those concerned that we are examining as quickly and as thoroughly as possible the various representations which have been made to us about the respective convictions, including material contained in two recently published books.

Passport Office

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the adequacy of the arrangements for dealing with telephone calls at the passport office in Petty France; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: A significant increase in demand led to abnormal delays in the handling of passport applications at all offices this year. Because the London passport office still has a backlog of work, it is still receiving an abnormal volume of telephone inquiries which may make it difficult at peak times for the public to contact the London office by telephone. Work is being transferred to other offices, where there are no longer any delays, to clear the arrears in London as quickly as possible. As a result I expect that the London passport office will soon be able to respond promptly to all telephone inquiries.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when it became practice to stamp the passports of visitors granted an extension of stay requiring them to register at once with the police.

Mr. Waddington: It is not possible to say precisely when it became the practice to endorse the passports with the requirement to register with the police but it certainly predates the Immigration Act 1971 by very many years.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from the five countries for which visas have recently been required have been sent back to the country of origin since 6 October despite the intervention of an hon. Member.

Mr. Waddington: On 7 October, two passengers were incorrectly returned. On 19 October, five passengers were sent back when a right hon. or hon. Member had expressed an interest in the case prior to the decision to refuse entry, and on the same day a further passenger was sent back when his case was not identified from the details provided by the hon. Member.

Although I am sure the House will understand the special difficulties which have recently obtained at the airport terminals concerned, I naturally regret the discourtesy to hon. and right hon. Members.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if a record is kept of the stated reason for travelling to the United Kingdom of visitors who are refused entry.

Mr. Waddington: Yes, on individual case papers only.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that nationals of the countries covered by the visa requirements outlined in the statement of 21 October who have the right of permanent settlement in the United Kingdom stamped in their passports do not require to obtain a re-entry visa when visiting their country of origin.

Mr. Waddington: Citizens of Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka do not need a visa if they are settled here and return after an absence abroad of less than two years. The visa requirement for citizens of Nigeria will have a similar exemption. Arrangements have been made to enable those who are exempt from the visa requirement to obtain an endorsement in their passport confirming their exemption.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will state, in respect of the year ended June 1986, the number of passengers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ghana who *(a)* were admitted to the United Kingdom, *(b)* were refused admission to the United Kingdom and *(c)* are believed by his Department to have absconded following temporary admission;

(2) if he will state, in respect of the year ended June 1986, the number of passengers from South Africa who *(a)* were admitted to the United Kingdom, *(b)* were refused admission to the United Kingdom and *(c)* are believed to have absconded following temporary admission.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is given in the following table. Figures by nationality of passengers admitted in June 1986 are not yet available. Figures by nationality of passengers who absconded which cover all ports are only available from 1 January 1986.

United Kingdom

Nationality	*Number of passengers admitted in the year ending May 1986*	*Number of passengers refused leave to enter and removed in the year ending*		*Number of passengers known to have absconded*[1]	
		May 1986	*June 1986*	*Between July and December 1985*[2]	*Between January and June 1986*
India	259,000	2,745	2,931	37	131
Pakistan	117,000	1,962	2,094	9	28
Bangladesh	29,000	1,459	1,491	79	129

Nationality	Number of passengers admitted in the year ending May 1986	Number of passengers refused leave to enter and removed in the year ending May 1986	Number of passengers refused leave to enter and removed in the year ending June 1986	Number of passengers known to have absconded[1] Between July and December 1985[2]	Number of passengers known to have absconded[1] Between January and June 1986
Nigeria	248,000	3,461	3,634	5	19
Ghana	39,000	1,540	1,596	15	25
South Africa	99,500	118	123	0	0

[1] Includes any passengers who absconded from the control at their port of entry or who absconded from detention.
[2] Passengers arriving at Heathrow Terminal 3 only.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement for the year ended June 1986 of the total number of passengers from each country *(a)* admitted and *(b)* refused admission to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: The following table gives, by nationality, the numbers of passengers admitted to the United Kingdom in the year ending May 1986 and the numbers refused entry and removed from the United Kingdom in both the year ending May 1986 and the year ending June 1986. Figures by nationality of passengers admitted in June 1986 are not yet available.

Passengers given leave to enter and passengers refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom by nationality, excluding European Community nationals

Nationality	Total passengers admitted in the year ending May 1986	Passengers refused leave to enter and removed in the year ending May 1986	Passengers refused leave to enter and removed in the year ending June 1986
Commonwealth			
Australia	375,000	67	77
Bangladesh	29,000	1,459	1,491
Barbados	9,050	6	6
Canada	495,000	63	71
Cyprus	38,300	82	83
Ghana	39,000	1,540	1,596
Guyana	6,500	13	12
Hong Kong BDTC	60,100	140	114
India	259,000	2,745	2,931
Jamaica	30,200	101	105
Kenya	28,600	67	68
Malaysia	74,000	139	153
Malta	39,600	24	24
Mauritius	17,700	109	114
New Zealand	97,000	26	27
Nigeria	248,000	3,461	3,634
Sierra Leone	8,000	68	62
Singapore	36,700	50	52
Sri Lanka	27,800	502	408
Tanzania	12,100	80	87
Trinidad and Tobago	23,900	5	5
Uganda	7,730	65	74
Zimbabwe	17,500	43	45
Zambia	11,700	28	31
British Overseas citizens	14,400	51	55
Other Commonwealth Countries	31,500	145	144
COMMONWEALTH TOTAL	2,040,000	11,099	11,469
Foreign nationals			
Algeria	25,000	679	667
Egypt	51,900	69	66
Argentina	25,800	111	116
Austria	112,000	60	57
Brazil	62,900	136	149
Bulgaria	4,640	18	24
Chile	11,200	42	34
China	13,000	28	28
Colombia	22,100	276	266
Cuba	860	1	1
Czechoslovakia	13,700	12	9
Ethiopia	5,640	42	43
Finland	83,200	23	28
German Democratic Republic	5,650	11	12
Hungary	19,800	16	21
Indonesia	15,900	10	13
Iran	65,100	338	339

Nationality	Total passengers admitted in the year ending May 1986	Passengers refused leave to enter and removed in the year ending	
		May 1986	June 1986
Iraq	20,900	122	125
Israel	108,000	170	172
Japan	337,000	79	86
Jordan	26,900	25	25
Kuwait	33,500	5	6
Lebanon	38,900	83	81
Libya	3,890	91	96
Mexico	51,400	33	32
Morocco	18,000	800	792
Norway	274,000	36	35
Pakistan	117,000	1,962	2,094
Peru	9,400	41	41
Philippines	27,700	130	128
Poland	43,000	115	118
Romania	3,440	19	19
Saudi Arabia	51,400	87	85
Somalia	1,980	5	8
South Africa	99,500	118	123
Sudan	18,300	43	46
Sweden	380,000	88	95
Switzerland	258,000	59	50
Syria	15,200	23	40
Thailand	20,000	37	37
Tunisia	9,820	165	155
Turkey	56,800	852	834
United States of America	3,000,000	620	653
USSR	11,200	84	84
Uruguay	4,200	7	7
Venezuela	12,300	6	9
Yugoslavia	38,800	159	160
Other Foreign countries	161,000	495	515
Stateless	77,100	645	649
NON EC FOREIGN NATIONAL TOTAL	5,870,000	9,076	9,281
ALL NATIONALITIES EXCLUDING EC	7,910,000	20,175	20,750

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any compensation arrangements will be introduced by the Government for the families of visitors detained at Heathrow and other ports of entry to cover their accommodation, travel expenses and loss of earnings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost per annum of a visa immigration officer at Heathrow; how many there are at present in Heathrow; how many interpreters of Indian languages are stationed at present in Heathrow; and what is the estimated cost per annum of keeping them there.

Mr. Waddington: At 30 September 1986, 542 immigration officers and seven interpreters specialising in languages of the Indian sub-continent were based at Heathrow. The other information requested which is readily available is as follows.

The basic salary scale for immigration officers ranges from £5,605 to £10,188, and for interpreters from £6,681 to £9,452. In addition they receive London weighting, premium pay for weekend working, overtime and a shift disturbance allowance of 16·5 per cent. of basic pay for an immigration officer and 10·5 per cent. for an interpreter.

Mr. Janner: asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he made of the cost of installing additional officers at Heathrow to cope with the increased work load of entry applications as opposed to sending additional officers abroad.

Mr. Waddington: On certain assumptions it was estimated that up to 300 additional immigration service staff might have been required at all ports to meet the extra workload imposed by the growth of difficult casework. Extra office, control and detention accommodation would also have been required. Not only is this not available in the existing buildings, but its provision could not have guaranteed a satisfactory solution or an end to congestion and delays in the long term. Complex or difficult cases simply cannot be quickly and effectively scrutinised at the ports.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis his Department establishes the numbers and natural origins of visitors alleged to be absconders.

Mr. Waddington: The record of absconders is of people of whom all trace is lost either before a decision is made on whether they qualify for entry or after they have been refused entry and are avoiding removal. The figure includes those who:

(a) abscond from immigration control areas or detention accommodation;

(b) have been allowed temporary admission to a private address or hotel to a specific date, but who fail to report on the due date and with whom contact is lost;

(c) have been similarly allowed temporary admission but without a restriction as to reporting on a specific date, who cannot subsequently be traced when the immigration service seek to contact them;

(d) are reported by their hosts as having absconded from private addresses.

Nationality is taken as that given in the passport produced.

This category is different from that of overstayers, who are admitted as visitors but then stay on.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many passengers in total have been granted temporary admission in each quarter of the current year;

(2) how many passengers refused entry to the United Kingdom were *(a)* detained, *(b)* given temporary admission and *(c)* given temporary admission to hotels in each quarter since January.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1986]: The table gives the figures available for the numbers of passengers taken into detention and the numbers of passengers granted temporary admission. The readily available information regarding passengers temporarily admitted to hotels relates to the periods from 27 March to 29 April 1986 and from 20 July to 20 October when 681 and 1,055 passengers respectively were so admitted; passengers temporarily admitted on more than one occasion may be counted more than once and the figures do not differentiate between those refused leave to enter and those whose cases are subject to further inquiry.

	Period in 1986		
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*July and August*
Number of passengers taken into detention in approved accommodation either pending further examination or after refusal of leave to enter	3,598	3,808	2,668
Number of passengers granted temporary admission			
Pending further examination	1,656	1,582	2,074
After refusal of leave to enter[1]	1,948	2,756	2,281

[1] The same person may be counted in both categories.

Mr. John Stalker

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the total amount of police time expended by the inquiry team under the chief constable of the West Yorkshire police into the conduct of the deputy chief constable of the Greater Manchester police;

(2) what has been the cost of the investigation by the chief constable of the West Yorkshire police into the conduct of the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A precise calculation is not possible, but a chief superintendent, five inspectors, three sergeants, three constables and a typist worked full-time for nine weeks on this inquiry.

A bill for £25,000 for additional costs such as travelling expenses and overtime has been set to the Greater Manchester police authority. The question of any further charge will be considered by the West Yorkshire police authority.

Motoring Offences

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis towards the priority to be given to issuing on-the-spot fines for motorists crossing red traffic lights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The commissioner has informed me that his officers deal with traffic signal offences as and when they are detected. Officers have the discretion to give a verbal warning, to issue a fixed penalty notice, or to report such offences for prosecution.

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action has been taken or is being taken by Jersey to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human rights in the Campbell and Cosans case;

(2) what action has been taken or is being taken by the Isle of Man to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human rights in the Campbell and Cosans case;

(3) what action has been taken or is being taken by Guernsey to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human rights in the Campbell and Cosans case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that corporal punishment is not administered in schools in Jersey and Guernsey; and that the authorities in the Isle of Man are keeping the matter under review pending action by the United Kingdom.

Shooting Equipment (Transportation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take on the ruling of the Bristol Crown Court on 8 August that no motor vehicle would be considered a secure container, even though locked, for the transport of shooting equipment by members of the National Small-Bore Rifle Association.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The defendant in this case has been granted leave by the judge to state a case for the opinion of the High Court. It would be inappropriate for me to comment before that opinion is known.

Drug Abuse Control

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 22 October about the Minister of State's visit to South America in respect of drug abuse control, how much financial assistance was offered; and what information he has as to how this compares with that offered by other European countries.

Mr. Mellor: The Government plan to spend around £1 million on drug-related assistance in South America. The main elements of this programme consist of £600,000 and

£200,000 in support of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control law enforcement projects in Bolivia (Los Yungas) and Ecuador respectively. In response to requests from Governments in the region we have undertaken to provide some help with training for medical and technical experts and the police, and training in the use of sniffer dogs for drugs detection. Offers of direct bilateral assistance, the detailed costings of which have yet to be finalised, have also been made in respect of the following items:

Bolivia

(i) contribution towards the cost of a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre in Cochabamba;

Peru

(i) cost of repairs to a Britten-Norman Islander aircraft confiscated by the police from drug traffickers;

(ii) the purchase of a second Islander aircraft which, with the other aircraft, would enable the police to transport a complete 'Condor' team on jungle raids;

Columbia

(i) provision of 2 spectophotometers for drug analysis.

We understand that the other European countries which are supporting UNFDAC's activities in South America are Italy (47 million United States dollars), Federal Republic of Germany (5·2 million DM) and Sweden (0·7 million United States dollars).

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Martin Love in Fermanagh on 8 April 1985; and if he will give details;

(2) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John McVitty in Fermanagh on 8 July; and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Martin Blaney in South Tyrone on 6 October; and if he will give details.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Brent, East on 16 June, *Official Report*, columns *434-35*, what has been the result of the investigation into the events leading to the shooting of Francis Bradley in county Derry on 18 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1986]: On completion of their inquiries into Mr. Bradley's death the Royal Ulster Constabulary submitted a file to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, who directed on 29 July that none of the soldiers involved should be prosecuted. A date for an inquest has not yet been arranged.

THE ARTS

Library Services

35. **Mr. Forth** asked the Minister for the Arts what assessment has been made by his office of the relationship between the amount of public expenditure on local library services and the number of books lent per capita in the various library authorities.

Mr. Luce: I am circulating a table in the *Official Report* which shows that there is no direct relationship. Much library expenditure is on services other than lending.

Public library authorities in England: expenditure and use per 1,000 day-time population[1] 1984-85

	Total expenditure £	*Issues*		*Requests for loans*	*Enquiries*
		Books	*Other media*		
Counties	6,389	11,976	213·2	125·4	634·3
London including City	12,897	10,581	567·2	175·0	1,258·6
Metropolitan districts	7,589	11,614	361·9	93·6	746·4
England	7,616	11,689	303·0	124·9	740·7

[1] Day-time population used in order to reflect the duty of library authorities to serve all who live, work or study full-time in their area.

Source:

CIPFA Public Library Statistics 1984-85, adjusted for authorities which failed to return questionnaires or complete questions relating to the above table.

Business Sponsorship

36. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement about progress on encouraging business sponsorship of the arts.

37. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the progress of the business sponsorship of the arts.

Mr. Luce: I am happy to say that business sponsorship of the arts continues to expand. I announced on 15 October the latest award winners under the business sponsorship incentive scheme, which bring the total new money in the first two years of the scheme to some £10·5 million. The scheme has encouraged 356 companies to sponsor the arts for the first time.

Sadler's Wells Theatre

31. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will now make a further statement on the long-term prospects of securing adequate resources for Sadler's Wells theatre.

Mr. Luce: I am cautiously optimistic about Sadler's Well, though it is, of course, for the theatre, as a receiving theatre, to resolve its own funding problems. It has received increased rents from Arts Council clients; and two sponsors, the Digital Equipment Company and Northern Telecom, have come forward with substantial support. I was very glad to be able to add £25,000 to one of those sponsorships from my own business sponsorship incentive scheme.

SCOTLAND

NHS (Tayside)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on the National Health Service in Tayside health board in each year since 1980; and if he will express each of these figures using a GDP deflator for constant prices.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:-

Tayside Health Board

	Gross NHS expenditure at cash prices[1] *£ million*	*At 1984-85 prices as measured by GDP deflator £ million*
1980-81	119·718	153·670
1981-82	130·440	152·403
1982-83	139·313	151·793
1983-84	147·606	153·920
1984-85	156·199	156·199
1985-86	[2]163·452	[2]154·196

[1] Comprising expenditure on hospital and community health services, family practitioner services and capital.
[2] Provisional figures.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage level of rate support grant made available to Dundee district council and Scotland overall in 1980 and at the latest date.

Mr. Ancram: Rate support grant for Dundee was 35·2 per cent. of relevant expenditure, including loan charges, in 1980-81 and 28·5 per cent. of budgeted relevant expenditure in 1986-87. The corresponding figures for Scotland are 57·6 per cent. for 1980-81 and 47 per cent. for 1986-87. The grant figures used for 1986-87 are based on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 4) Order 1985. No adjustment has been made for grant penalties since they will be restored if authorities bring their expenditure down to guideline on outturn.

Tayside Regional Council (Expenditure)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total expediture of Tayside regional council expressed at constant prices in each year since 1982.

Mr. Ancram: Figures for total expenditure by Tayside regional council, excluding loan charges and interest receipts, on services relevant for rate support grant since 1981-82 are set out below. They have been expressed at November 1985 prices.

Total Expenditure	*£ million*
1981-82	189,040
1982-83	189,827
1983-84	193,063
1984-85	193,954
1985-86	[1]187,210
1986-87	[2]187,681

[1] Provisional Outturn
[2] Budget Estimate

Primary Postgraduate Courses

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many places on primary postgraduate courses in Scottish colleges of education were unfilled as at 30 September; how many places are still unfilled; and if he will detail the unfilled places college by college.

Mr. John MacKay: When courses commenced at the colleges of education on 6 and 7 October, 17 of the 300 places available on primary postgraduate teacher training courses were unfilled. By 22 October the number had risen to 18, the colleges with unfilled places being Aberdeen (2), Dundee (6), Moray House (9) and St. Andrews (1).

Heart Disease

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many discharges there have been from Scottish hospitals in each of the past three years of patients who had suffered a myocardial infarction.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of discharges of patients with a principal diagnosis of acute myocardial infarction is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1982	17,814
1983	18,086
[1]1984	18,731

[1] Latest available date.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many deaths were certified in Scotland as due to ischaemic heart disease in 1984, 1985 and so far in 1986.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Deaths from ischaemic heart disease[1] *in Scotland*

Year	*Number*
1984	18,107
1985	18,758
1986	[2]9,532

[1] International classification of diseases, Codes 410 to 414.
[2] Provisional figure for January to June.

Health Budget

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the health budget was spent on salaries in each of the past 10 years; and how this was divided up between medical, nursing, scientific and technical and administrative staff.

Mr. John MacKay: Information on wages and salaries costs held centrally relates to current expenditure by health boards on the provision of hospital and community health

services. The proportion of HCH current expenditure accounted for by wages and salaries in each year since 1978-79 is shown in table 1. Figures for years prior to 1978-79 are not available on a comparable basis. Information on the breakdown of wages and salaries costs is not available in precisely the form requested. A breakdown of these wages and salaries costs over the various staff categories recorded in health boards' annual accounts is given in table 2.

Table 1

	Proportion of HCH current expenditure on salaries and wages Per cent.
1978-79	72·9
1979-80	75·1
1980-81	76·3
1981-82	74·0
1982-83	74·4
1983-84	74·3
1984-85	74·4
[1]1985-86	73·8

[1] Provisional.

Table 2
Analysis of HCH current expenditure on wages and salaries

	Specialists Per cent.	*Medical/ Dental Per cent.*	*Nursing Per cent.*	*Para-Medical Per cent.*	*Administration and Clerical Per cent.*	*Domestic and Ancillary Per cent.*	*Tradesmen and Others Per cent.*
1978-79	9·0	4·1	46·0	7·9	8·9	19·5	4·6
1979-80	9·6	4·0	46·1	8·1	8·7	18·8	4·7
1980-81	9·9	4·0	48·8	8·2	8·7	17·2	3·2
1981-82	9·8	3·9	48·8	8·5	8·8	16·9	3·3
1982-83	9·7	3·9	49·3	8·7	8·8	16·3	3·3
1983-84	9·8	4·3	48·9	8·9	8·8	16·1	3·2
1984-85	10·4	4·5	48·9	9·1	8·7	15·2	3·2
[1]1985-86	10·3	4·4	49·3	9·4	8·8	14·6	3·2

[1] Provisional.

Dental Services

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the total cost of general dental services in Scotland was recovered from patients' charges in each of the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Income from patients' charges as a percentage of gross cost of the General Dental Services

Financial Year	*Percentage*
1981-82	22·88
1982-83	24·42
1983-84	24·61
1984-85	24·80
1985-86	[1]26·58

[1] Provisional figure.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total hospital bed complement of the National Health Service at the most recent available date; what has been the net change since 1984; and if he will break down the figures by health board area.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	30 September 1984	*30 September 1985*	*Net Change*
Scotland	59,680	58,946	−734
Argyll and Clyde	4,587	4,525	−62
Ayrshire and Arran	3,060	3,047	−13
Borders	947	936	−11
Dumfries and Galloway	1,574	1,540	−34
Fife	3,191	3,327	+136
Forth Valley	3,490	3,499	+9
Grampian	5,668	5,639	−29
Greater Glasgow	14,401	14,042	−359
Highland	2,324	2,193	−131
Lanarkshire	5,595	5,527	−68
Lothian	8,877	8,739	−138
Orkney	131	131	—
Shetland	160	160	—
Tayside	5,476	5,439	−37
Western Isles	199	202	+3

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of sheltered house units in Scotland; and how many of these are modified for wheelchair use.

Mr. Ancram: There were over 21,500 sheltered dwellings in Scotland at 31 March 1986, of which almost 900 have been adapted for wheelchairs.

Strokes

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of patients admitted to hospital in each of the past five years who had suffered a stroke.

Mr. John MacKay: There are no nationally available statistics on the number of admissions to hospital by

condition, but the number of patients discharged with a principal diagnosis of cerebrovascular disease is as follows:

	Number
1980	14,557
1981	15,151
1982	14,711
1983	15,678
[1]1984	15,874

[1]latest available date

These figures relate to episodes of care in hospital, so a patient with more than one such episode will be counted on each occasion.

Operations (Statistics)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* renal transplants, *(b)* coronary by-pass operations, *(c)* cataract extractions and *(d)* hip joint replacement operations were carried out in Scotland in 1985; and what are the figures for 1986 so far.

Mr. John MacKay: The information for the latest years available in each case, is as follows:

(a) renal transplants 1985—126
(b) coronary by-pass operations 1985—1,186
(c) cataract extractions 1984—6,806
(d) hip joint replacement operations 1984—2,877.

Figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Urban Aid

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to reply to the Ruchill community project, Glasgow, about its representations to him on urban aid funding.

Mr. Ancram: There is no record in the Scottish Office of any such representations having been received.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of jobs in Scotland presently funded through the urban aid programme.

Mr. Ancram: A total of 1,922 full-time and 839 part-time jobs are at present directly funded under urban programme projects.

Agricultural Colleges

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of staff will be made redundant at each Scottish college of agriculture and at each agricultural research institute in Scotland during 1987; what levels of staff will exist in each college and institute at the end of 1987 compared with the present; and what compensation for redundancy is being offered to those whose contractual age of retirement is 65 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The total number of redundancies announced to date, to take effect from 31 March 1987, are as follows:

	Number
Scottish Agricultural Colleges	
East of Scotland College of Agriculture	11
North of Scotland College of Agriculture	Nil
West of Scotland Agricultural College	2
Scottish Agricultural Research Institutes	
Scottish Institute for Agricultural Engineering	24
Macaulay Institute for Soil Research	12

The position remains under review but it is not possible to project the likely staffing levels required by the end of 1987.

While redundancy procedures, including compensation payments, do not apply to staff over 60 years of age certain members of the colleges' staff in that age category, with terms and conditions of employment up to age 65, have been advised that they will be retired early. This follows a request from the unions concerned that college management should apply the conditions of the Civil Service model redundancy agreement which require a review of the age of retirement practice within the area concerned before other staff savings are made.

Community Charge

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the position of mentally handicapped members of family households being allowed exemption from the community charges or part thereof; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The director of the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend on 16 October on this point among others. All the views expressed in response to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" will be carefully taken into account in the formulation of the Government's legislative proposals.

Loan Companies

Mr. Michael Cocks and the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will request local authorities to take steps to prevent private loan companies from operating on their housing estates to pressurise tenants into taking out loans with them to exercise their right to buy their houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no complaints about private loan companies operating on local authority estates in Scotland and he has no plans to take the action proposed.

Medical Care, Dundee

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice his Department offers to the British Medical Association, the British Dental Association, and the British Pharmaceutical Society to ensure that adequate general practitioner, dental and pharmacy facilities are provided in estates north of the Kingsway, Dundee.

Mr. John MacKay: None.

Teachers (Courses)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the intake for secondary teaching qualification courses at Dundee college of education in each year since 1981.

Mr. John Mackay: The intakes to secondary teaching qualification courses at Dundee college of education from 1981 to date are as set out in the following table:

	Number of intakes
1981	99
1982	79
1983	60
1984	45
1985	45
1986	70[1]

[1] Provisional

ENERGY

Coal Industry

5. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he will next meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the present state of the coal industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

15. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the new chairman of the National Coal Board, he will raise with him the board's policy towards the reinstatement of sacked miners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the dismissal and re-employment of employees is a matter entirely for the management of British Coal.

22. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest assessment of the effect on the United Kingdom of the new European Economic Community rules on state aid to the coal industry.

Mr. David Hunt: The effect on the United Kingdom of the European Community state aids decision is, as the Government intended, to allow us to continue to give essential financial support to the National Coal Board without breaking our treaty obligations.

24. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the National Coal Board; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal, in which we discuss a range of coal related issues.

26. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will outline Government policy towards coal production in the light of present and foreseeable oil prices.

Mr. David Hunt: Coal has a major role to play in meeting the nation's long-term fuel requirements provided it can be produced efficiently, reliably and at prices which are fully competitive with those of other fuels.

29. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal at regular intervals, and discuss a wide variety of issues concerning the coal industry.

Energy Efficiency Year

6. **Mr. Ground** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of Energy Efficiency Year.

Mr. Peter Walker: Energy Efficiency Year is proving to be an outstanding success. The target of 1,000 events has already been beaten. The number of firms taking advantage of our survey schemes has increased by 40 per cent. Those using our main industrial schemes will save industry £500 million in energy costs. Two hundred thousand homes will have been insulated by voluntary groups.

25. **Mr. Ashby** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what further initiatives his Department has taken to promote Energy Efficiency Year.

Mr. David Hunt: On 10 September my right hon. Friend launched the autumn Monergy campaign which features striking new TV and press advertising, local newspaper features and special promotions. A free 38 page magazine called "Monergy News" has been produced and will have a 1·5 million distribution through builders merchants, do-it-yourself superstores and other outlets and in response to requests generated by the Monergy advertisements.

Energy efficiency related events, which have already passed our original target of 1,000 events are continuing and I look forward to my Department's national energy management conference and exhibition in December as being a fitting climax to the year's activities.

British Gas

11. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Gas to discuss the development of substituted natural gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I regularly meet the chairman of British Gas plc to discuss matters concerning the gas industry.

14. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on marketing plans for British Gas.

Mr. Peter Walker: The sale of British Gas is on course for late November and shows every sign of being the most popular flotation ever.

Offshore Supplies Office

12. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to review the workings of the Offshore Supplies Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Offshore Supplies Office will continue to support the activities of the offshore supplies industry.

Energy Efficiency

13. **Mr. Powley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the savings to date which industry and commerce have secured through energy efficiency measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Energy efficiency measures undertaken by industry and commerce are currently leading to savings of more than £500 million a year. The potential for savings in industry and commerce is, however, £2 billion per year and much more needs to be done.

Gas Prices

17. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last discussed gas prices with the chairman of the British Gas Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Prices are a matter for the commercial judgment of British Gas plc within the framework of the Gas Act 1986 and the authorisation issued to the company on 23 August.

North Sea Oil

18. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report on and estimate the current and projected levels respectively, of North sea related development work, with particular reference to the implications for the oil-related construction industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: So far this year I have approved 12 new projects. More than £2 billion is likely to be spent on their developmnent. Eighty thousand tonnes of fabrication work worth £200 million have been awarded this year to United Kingdom industry.

Tidal Power

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about his Department's support for tidal power.

Mr. David Hunt: As my right hon. Friend announced on 9 July the Department of Energy's programme of research and development on tidal energy comprises: advanced investigations and site exploration of a Severn barrage near to Cardiff and Weston-super-Mare; support towards the cost of studies into a barrage across the Mersey estuary conducted by the Mersey Barrage Company; a set of generic tidal energy studies complementary to these two major projects.

Wind Power

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Energy what support his Department has given to wind power; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has spent some £17 million, since 1979, on research and development into the harnessing of wind power for electricity generation. Most of this support has been directed to the development of large wind turbines for United Kingdom grid operation and includes major projects on Orkney and at Carmarthen Bay.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many foreign civil nuclear reactors are within 250 miles and 500 miles, respectively, of the shores of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: The publicly available figures on the siting of power reactors in Europe show that there are some 140 civil power reactors in operation or under construction within 500 miles of the United Kingdom shore. Of these some 60 are within 250 miles of the United Kingdom's shores.

Northumberland Coalfield

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to visit the Northumberland coalfield.

Mr. David Hunt: I make frequent visits to the coalfields, and visited Westoe colliery, near Durham on 13 July. I hope to make a further visit to the north-east area in the near future.

Oil and Gas Reserves

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the most up-to-date estimate of United Kingdom oil and gas reserves.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The most up-to-date estimate of United Kingdom remaining discovered oil reserves are 750 to 1,880 million tonnes of oil and gas reserves 648 to 2,015 billion cubic metres of gas.

British Coal (House Sales)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the average price paid for houses sold by British Coal during the last 12 months.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a management matter for British Coal.

Coal Conversion Scheme

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to extend the coal conversion scheme beyond June 1987.

Mr. David Hunt: There are no plans to extend the coal firing scheme beyond 30 June 1987.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what respect residents of Bophuthatswana and other republics situated within the boundaries of the Republic of South Africa are treated differently from South Africans by Her Majesty's embassy in Pretoria in respect of passports, visas and immigration control.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not recognise any of the so-called homelands in South Africa as independent states. All applications on consular and entry clearance matters are treated accordingly.

South Korea

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom's ambassador designate to Seoul has been instructed to increase the priority given to securing protection for British intellectual property rights to the level that his American counterpart accords the issue on behalf of American rightholders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: This matter was indeed one of the main issues which the new ambassador to Korea was briefed to raise with Ministers. It has already been the subject of strong representations here and in Seoul. Most recently it was raised by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade with his Korean counterpart on 20 October.

China (Government Bonds)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 18 July at column *644-45*, what detailed proposals have been made by the Chinese People's Republic to repay their pre-1948 debts to British bondholders; if the matter was discussed with the Chinese authorities during his recent visit to China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend on 18 July 1986.

Chile

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times in the last year Her Majesty's Government has made representations to the Chilean Government concerning the political situation in the country.

Mr. Eggar: We made frequent and repeated representations to the Government of Chile, both bilateral and with our EC partners, about the political situation there.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department has on human rights violations in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: We liaise closely with human rights organisations based in Chile, Geneva and elsewhere. We take every suitable opportunity to make our concerns known to the Chilean Government about their continuing poor human rights record.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the provision of supplies to St. Helena in the event of the Royal Mail Ship St. Helena being denied facilities at Cape Town, Republic of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are satisfied that, if required, alterations to the present service could be made to safeguard essential passenger and cargo movements to and from St. Helena.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many St. Helenians have attended university after completing their schooling on St. Helena in the last six years for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Jonathan Wash

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department has received to date from the Government of the Ivory Coast in connection with the death of Jonathan Wash of Ipswich.

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from the Government of the Ivory Coast about the circumstances of the death of Mr. Jonathan Wash there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received a report on the post mortem examination carried out in the Ivory Coast shortly after the death took place. The investigation by the Ivory Coast authorities into the cause of Mr. Wash's death has not been completed. We expect to receive a report in due course.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has yet received a questionnaire from either the Minister of Justice of the Ivory Coast or the examining magistrate in connection with the investigation into the death of Jonathan Wash of Ipswich.

Mr. Eggar: No such questionnaire or other request for evidence has been received.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations has he made to the Government of the Ivory Coast concerning the inquiry into the death of Mr. Jonathan Wash, with specific reference to co-operation between the police forces of the United Kingdom and the Ivory Coast.

Mr. Eggar: We have repeatedly expressed our concern to the Ivorian authorities at the delay in completing the investigation. No request for information or assistance has been made by the police authorities in the Ivory Coast.

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what action has been taken or is being taken by the Turks and Caicos Islands to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case;

(2) what action has been taken or is being taken by Montserrat to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case;

(3) what action has been taken or is being taken by Bermuda to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case;

(4) what action has been taken or is being taken by the British Virgin Islands to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case;

(5) what action has been taken or is being taken by the Cayman Islands to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken or is being taken by St. Helena to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case.

Mr. Eggar: The relevant local legislation is at present under review.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken or is being taken by Gibraltar to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case.

Mr. Eggar: None. It is a matter of common school practice that corporal punishment is not administered in schools in Gibraltar.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken or is being taken by Anguilla to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case.

Mr. Eggar: A new Education Act is under consideration. The European Court's judgment will be taken into account.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken or is

being taken by the Falkland Islands to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Campbell and Cosans case.

Mr. Eggar: Education legislation is at present under review.

Entry Clearance Officers (India)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Indian languages are spoken by the immigration officers being sent to India.

Mr. Eggar: One officer is qualified in Punjabi and one in Gujerati, with a working knowledge of Urdu.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training in Indian languages his Department proposes to give to each of the new entry clearance officers for India.

Mr. Eggar: There is no operational requirement for such training. Interviews are conducted, where necessary, through local interpreters fluent in the different dialects.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the case load of each entry clearance officer sent to India will be.

Mr. Eggar: It is not possible to predict this, but entry clearance officers are expected to handle many more visit visa applications than they do settlement cases.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs where the 12 new entry clearance officers for India will be stationed; how many interpreters will be allocated to them; what is the cost of each interpreter for entry clearance cases, including his salary; when each of the 12 additional entry clearance officers to be sent to India will arrive; and when they will start work.

Mr. Eggar: Details of the disposition of the new entry clearance officers, who normally start work the day after arrival, are as follows:

	New Delhi	*Bombay*	*Calcutta*	*Madras*
15-27 October	2	3	1	3
28 October		2		
9 November	1			

Authority has been given to posts to recruit 14 additional locally engaged staff in the interpreter-clerical grade. It has been left to local management to decide how many of the 14 need to be interpreters. The individual cost of each interpreter is not recorded centrally, but their average salary is £2,337 per annum.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will open a consulate in Ahmedabad and station entry clearance officers there.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements are proposed for dealing with emergency applications for visas by relatives of United Kingdom citizens in India, in case of severe illness or death.

Mr. Eggar: Arrangements already exist at all our missions to India for dealing urgently with visa applications in cases of genuine emergency, such as illness or bereavement.

Immigration

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what facilities will be made available for Members of Parliament to intervene in emergencies for Indian relatives of United Kingdom citizens who wish to obtain visas.

Mr. Eggar: I am always happy to assist in cases of genuine emergency and to pass on to our missions overseas requests for assistance. In normal circumstances visitors are advised to apply well in advance.

Cyprus

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any recent representations have been made to the Turkish Government about the presence of Turkish military forces in Northern Cyprus; and if he will state Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the continued presence of such forces in Cyprus.

Mr. Eggar: We have made clear to all parties to the dispute our view that the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Republic of Cyprus must form part of a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus problem. We believe the United Nations Secretary General is best placed to help make progress towards that end. We will continue actively to support his efforts and encourage the parties to the dispute, including the Turkish Government, to co-operate with him.

Diplomatic Documents (Sale)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to take action to prohibit the sale of diplomatic passports, visas and honorary consulships by British-based companies.

Mr. Howard: I have been asked to reply. I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Repairs)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Transport what road works are in progress on the M1 motorway between London and Leicester; how long each has been in progress; and when each is scheduled to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

Site	Scheme	Start date	Programmed completion date
J1-2	Drainage work	23 October 1986	6 November 1986
J8	Major renewal	23 May 1986	7 November 1986
J11	Major renewal	29 June 1986	5 November 1986
J14-15	Major renewal	19 August 1986	11 November 1986

In addition, minor repairs take place from time to time. Work on the installation of additional matrix signals and incident detectors will also continue for the next six months.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further roadworks are planned for the M1 motorway between London and Leicester; when it is intended that such roadworks will commence; and when they will be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following further roadworks are planned in 1986-87:

Site	Scheme	Start date	Programmed completion date
J5	Carriageway repairs	28 October 1986	1 November 1986
J10	Repairs to hard shoulders drainage and safety barriers	February 1987	March 1987
J11	Centre reserve repairs	Early 1987	Yet to be determined
J12	Bridge testing	24 November 1986	22 December 1986
J12-13	Cable survey	5 January 1987	26 January 1987

Minor repairs will also take place from time to time.

Further works will take place in future years; the programme for these has not yet been finalised.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company (Grant)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much of his Department's financial grant to the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company for improvement in rail facilities has already been advanced.

Mr. David Mitchell: A formal offer of grant was made to the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company on 8 January 1986. As with all section 8 grants, the Company is expected to claim the grant in instalments as work is completed; so far no grant has been claimed.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether any inquiry was undertaken into the environmental consequences of his Department's financial grant to the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company for railway improvement.

Mr. David Mitchell: As is always the case with section 8 grant applications, a thorough assessment was made of the environmental benefits of switching traffic from road to rail.

Freight Trains (Speed Limits)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will introduce regulations to restrict the speed of freight trains running through built-up areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The day-to-day operation of the railways is the responsibility of the British Railways board and I have no powers to intervene.

St. Pancras-Sheffield line

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent proposals have been submitted to him by British Rail for investment in the St. Pancras-Sheffield line.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

M1-A1 (Inquiry)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the result of the M1-A1 inquiry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport expect to announce their decision around the turn of the year.

British Rail

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff are employed by British Rail in each of their regions; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is of course a matter for British Rail management but I understand from them that the information requested is as follows:

British Rail manpower figures, by Region

	Eastern	London Midland	Scottish	Southern	Western
1979	48,398	50,632	18,997	30,714	24,076
1980	46,801	49,471	18,939	30,047	23,561
1981	44,171	45,885	17,397	28,947	22,009
1982	41,929	43,519	16,999	27,659	20,883
1983	39,836	41,655	16,493	27,069	20,022
1984	37,378	39,609	15,851	26,446	18,752
1985	35,954	38,397	15,445	25,782	18,248
[1]1986	35,571	38,054	15,272	25,858	18,123

[1] As at 18 October 1986.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been invested by British Rail in each of its regions on improving rolling-stock and stations in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government do not keep records of this sort. It would, in any case, be impossible to apportion BR's rolling stock accurately between regions as much of it operates in more than one region.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether any railway stations are liable to be closed as a result of the introduction of radio signalling on British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the British Railways Board has no plans to propose the closure of any railway stations as a result of radio signalling.

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about privatising parts of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. Following the privatisation of British Rail's ancillary activities in hotels, ferries and hovercraft services, the emphasis now is on measures to broaden the participation of the private sector in supplying services to the railway. The objectives which we have recently given to the BR chairman ask him to establish specific programmes to this end.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what subsidy is being paid to British Rail in the current financial year: what subsidy is proposed for the next three years; how this compares with the subsidies paid in each year since 1974-75 in real and money terms ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Total subsidy for British Rail in 1986-87, including central government PSO grant, payments from passenger transport executives under section 20 of the Transport Act 1968 and level crossing grant is at present estimated at roundly £810 million, of which central Government's PSO grant settlement is £712·3 million. The central government PSO grant target for 1989-90 is £555 million in 1986-87 prices. Levels of PSO grant in intervening years will depend on the board's claims, as will future levels of level crossing grant. Future levels of PTE section 20 payments are the responsibility of the passenger transport authorities.

Comparable figures since 1975 are as follows:

Subsidy payments to British Rail (Central Government PSO grant, PTE section 20 payments and level crossing grant)

£ million

	Cash	*1986-87 prices*
1975	325	949
1976	334	849
1977	372	830
1978	441	884
1979	545	954
1980	649	949
1981	829	1,087
1982	909	1,106
1983	952	1,103
[1]1984-85	957	1,052
1985-86	914	948
1986-87	811	811

[1] Grant for 15 months to end March 1986 multiplied by 0·8

These figures demonstrate the railway's remarkable achievement in bringing grant back in real terms to the levels of the mid-1970s. We have now set objectives which will secure the future of the network with higher quality, while maintaining improvements in cost effectiveness.

M25 Motorway

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will direct that in the tendering process for the widening of the M25, Chertsey-Staines section, particular consideration be given to the provision of concrete safety barriers in the median reserve which will be unusually narrow;

(2) if, when seeking tenders for the widening of the M25, Chertsey-Staines section, he will ensure that competitive quotations for the provision of both steel and concrete safety barriers are obtained.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consultants are being appointed to prepare detailed proposals for the provision of additional traffic lanes between junctions 11 and 13. When we have their report and have decided how to proceed, the provision of safety barriers will be considered in the light of the Department's standards at the time.

There is sufficient land for a normal width central reservation.

Pedestrianisation

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he plans to publish further advice for local authorities on pedestrianisation schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic-free streets can help create a pleasanter environment in many shopping and residential areas. They must, however, be well planned to cater for necessary traffic and parking and to allow access including that by people with walking difficulties. We are updating our guide for local authorities "Pedestrian Schemes — Getting the Right Balance" and are now seeking the views of interested bodies about this. Once we have their views, we hope to publish the revised note shortly after.

London Coach Terminals

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the present volume of interchange at London coach terminals for passengers in transit to other locations outside London.

Mr. David Mitchell: The consultants carrying out LRT's coach terminal study have found that nearly a quarter of the total number of coach passengers arriving at Victoria coach station are "interlining" between coaches.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his Department's role in the consideration of prospective sites for London coach terminals;

(2) who will be the developer of the proposed new London coach terminal at Vauxhall bridge;

(3) if it is intended that the proposed new London coach terminal should be privately owned and operated;

(4) what is the role of London Regional Transport in the development consortium for the proposed new London coach terminal at Vauxhall bridge;

(5) if London Regional Transport is financially involved in the proposed development of a new London coach terminal at Vauxhall bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: In June last year, my right hon. Friend's predecessor asked LRT to undertake a study of current and future terminal requirements for long distance coaches in London. LRT is now consulting interested

parties on its findings, and will submit its final report to us once that process has finished. We will then make decisions on the best way forward.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to which private coach operators have expressed a financial interest in the development of a new London coach terminal at Vauxhall bridge.

Mr. David Mitchell: We are not aware of any expressions of interest by coach operators in developing, as opposed to using, a new terminal at Vauxhall.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what additional roadworks will be required to accommodate the proposed new London coach terminal at Vauxhall *(a)* on the immediate vicinity of the site and *(b)* elsewhere in London;

(2) what estimates have been made of the result of additional traffic generated by the location of a new London coach terminus at Vauxhall Bridge on the rate of traffic flows, noise and congestion in the area of Vauxhall Cross, with particular reference to Vauxhall bridge foot, Kennington lane, Nine Elms lane, South Lambeth road, Wandsworth road and the Albert embankment;

(3) what estimates have now been made of the combined net effect on traffic flows for the road systems and bridges between Blackfriars bridge and Chelsea bridge of the location of: *(a)* a Channel fixed link international terminal at Waterloo Station and *(b)* the proposed London coach terminal at Vauxhall bridge.

Mr. David Mitchell: A new London coach terminal is currently the subject of a consultation exercise by LRT on alternative sites. LRT's consultants' estimates are set down in their interim report, in particular in chapter 6. A copy has been placed in the Library.

As regards the Channel tunnel terminal, British Rail has commissioned from Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners a report on the impact of the generated road traffic in the Waterloo area. Copies of this report have been sent to the local authorities concerned, and I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the approximate costs of developing the proposed new London coach terminal at Vauxhall including *(a)* private investment costs and *(b)* public investment in roads and infrastructure.

Mr. David Mitchell: An approximate figure of £48 million for the capital costs of developing a new London coach terminal at Vauxhall was given in the interim report by LRT's consultants for the coach terminal study, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. I understand that the consultants are presently undertaking further work on cost estimates.

Urban Roads

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the report of the standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment review of urban road appraisal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The committee's report is published today together with the Government's response to it. Copies of both documents have been placed in the Library of the House. The Government are grateful to Professor Williams and his committee for their work, which represents a further step in the continuing development of assessment methods.

The report provides a foundation of broad principles on which to develop and refine appraisal methods for both urban and inter-urban trunk roads. Some of the recommendation can be applied immediately because of the flexibility which already exists in the Department's methods, which the committee has recognised and built upon. Since the report sets out principles rather than detailed prescriptions, much further work needs to be done before many of its recommendations can be applied to scheme assessment. I therefore do not expect the progress of existing schemes to be held up to await the outcome of such further work. As revised guidance is issued, this will be adopted in the preparation and assessment of urban and inter-urban schemes as appropriate. My Department will continue to keep its methods under review and to introduce improvements where possible.

Self Changing Gears

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about British Rail Engineering Ltd's purchasing policy regarding the axle drive units for the new Sprinter train and the implications of that decision for Self Changing Gears.

Mr. David Mitchell: The purchasing policy of British Rail and its subsidiaries, agreed by Ministers, is based on competitive procurement. The implementation of that policy is a matter for the board.

Traffic Corridors (London)

Mr. Barnett asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish the reports of the consultants whom his predessor commissioned in November 1984 to undertake studies in the four corridors, Blackwall to Archway, the south circular, Earls Court to Gunnersbury, and Brixton to Croydon and Purley, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I hope to do so before long.

Gatwick (Second Terminal)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the second terminal at Gatwick will be opened; what are the reasons for the delay in opening this terminal; and what steps are being taken to cope with the traffic at Gatwick in summer, 1987, as a result of the delay in bringing terminal 2 into operation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I will answer this question shortly.

A1/M1 Link Road

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the inspector's report on the A1/M1 link road; and how soon thereafter he intends to come to a decision.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspector's report was received in July. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport expect to announce their decision about the turn of the year.

London Regional Transport

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many route miles have been run on London Regional Transport's underground and bus services in the last six years for which figures are available.

Mr. David Mitchell: Figures are published in London Regional Transport's annual reports. The number of route miles in each of the last six years were:

Route miles

	Underground	*Bus*
Calendar year		
1980	241	1,750
1981	241	1,750
1982	241	1,710
1983	241	1,710
1984	241	1,730
Fiscal year		
1984-85	241	1,730
1985-86	245	[1]1,700

[1] The figures for 1985-86 exclude services operated for LRT by operators other than London Buses Limited, which when included would give 1,735 route miles.

A better indication of the level of service provided is given by vehicle miles run. The numbers of vehicle miles in each of the last six years were:

Vehicle miles

Millions

	Underground	*Bus*
Calendar year		
1980	30·5	173
1981	30·7	174
1982	29·0	164
1983	29·0	163
1984	29·3	166
Fiscal year		
1984-85	29·4	166
1985-86	29·7	[1]162

[1] The figures for 1985-86 exclude services operated for LRT by operators other than London Buses Limited, which when included would give 163 million vehicle miles.

Parked Vehicles (Lights)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with current standards and practice of the lighting of parked vehicles at night on roads where such lights are required.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern. I should be happy to look into any specific problem he has in mind.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

World Bank (Meeting)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of his meeting with the president of the World Bank on 20 October.

Mr. Chris Patten: I had a useful meeting with Mr. Conable. We discussed a number of important issues, including the possibility of a new general capital increase to increase the lending capacity of the bank; the current negotiations for the eighth replenishment of the International Development Association; and the environmental aspects of the bank's development projects and programmes.

PRIME MINISTER

Spending Commitments

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will itemise and specify the cost of all spending commitments announced publicly by Ministers since 25 July.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be announcing the Government's expenditure plans for the next three years in his autumn statement. More detailed figures will be published in the public expenditure White Paper early next year.

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if the speech by the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, the hon. Member of Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) on 14 October, on planning, represents Government policy; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. My hon. Friend's speech reiterated Government policy on planning and large new stores, and our firm and long-established policy on protection of the Green Belt.

EC (Agricultural Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister what steps have been taken by the European Council to seek to ensure that its decision of 4 December 1984 on the claiming back in future years of overspending on agriculture above the agreed level of increase, is implemented; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: 1986 is the first year in which the budget discipline conclusions will apply to agricultural spending. They state that in the event of failure to respect the financial guideline the Council shall, during the following two financial years, ensure that, barring unusual developments, agricultural expenditure is brought back within the limits imposed by the guideline. The 1987 draft budget provides 23 becu for agricultural guarantee expenditure which is at the level of the financial guideline.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister what steps have been taken by the European Council to seek to ensure that its decision of 4 December 1984 that agricultural spending should increase only by the natural increase in their own resources base, is implemented; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The conclusions of the Council on budgetary discipline which limits the increase in agricultural market support expenditure to no more than the rate of growth of the own resources base, also makes specific provision that account has to be taken of exceptional circumstances. 1986 is the first year in which the Budget discipline conclusions will apply to agricultural spending.

The Ecofin Council on 7 July agreed that the limit on agricultural spending in 1986 could be increased by the "amounts which can be justified mainly by the exceptional circumstances of the abnormally large depreciation of the dollar."

The 1987 draft budget provides 23 becu for expenditure on agricultural market support which is at the financial guideline.

Regional Development

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Welsh Office on the Government's submission to the European Economic Community entitled "United Kingdom Regional Development Programme 1986-1990", in so far as it relates to the economy of Wales.

The Prime Minister: "Section 8 — Wales" of the United Kingdom regional development programme 1986-90 was compiled by the Welsh Office on the basis of submissions from local and public authorities in Wales, together with largely statistically based information held within the Department. The Department of Trade and Industry co-ordinated the preparation of the full programme document, in consultation with all interested Departments, including the Welsh Office.

Mr. Marmaduke Hussey

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister which people outside Her Majesty's Government were consulted before she recommended to Her Majesty the appointment of Mr. Marmaduke Hussey as chairman of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The Prime Minister: It is not the practice to disclose what consultations, if any, precede recommendations to Her Majesty about the apppointment of the chairman of the BBC.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General if he will list each occasion since 1979 when he or a member of the Government has written to a wages council about the level of wage settlements in that sector; and if he will give details of each such initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The then Secretary of State wrote to the chairmen of the retail food and allied trades and the retail trades (non-food) wages councils on 25 February 1983, and to the chairman of the unlicensed place of refreshment wages council on 9 August 1983, about proposals published by those councils for increases in statutory minimum rates. These letters pointed out the potentially damaging effects on businesses and jobs if the proposals were confirmed, and asked the councils to give serious consideration to representations against the proposals.

The full text of the first two letters was given in answer to a question from the hon. Member on 31 March 1983 (columns *243-44*). I shall be pleased to send him a copy of the last one if he so wishes.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General how many applications there were to industrial tribunals for unfair dismissal due to trade union membership or trade union activities for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985; how many cases were heard in each year; and in how many such cases the claimant was successful.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The best information available is as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Number of applications	357	403	864
Number of applications withdrawn/ settlement agreed	225	253	414
Applications heard by Industrial Tribunals	132	150	179
Number of successful applicants	21	21	58

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General how many applications there were to industrial tribunals for unfair dismissal due to non-membership of a trade union for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985; how many cases were heard in each year; and in how many such cases the claimant was successful.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The best information available is as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Number of applications	15	24	4
Number of applications withdrawn/ settlement agreed	8	19	1
Applications heard by Industrial Tribunals	7	5	4
Number of successful applicants	3	0	0

War Pensioners

Mr. Corbett asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the number of war pensioners under retirement age who are unemployed.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available.

Fraud

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Paymaster General how many officers are employed in England and Wales by his Department in investigating fraud; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: My Department's fraud investigation work was reorganised in 1984 and comparative figures for earlier years are not available.

The number of staff employed is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1984	696
1985	821
1986 September	1,083

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the ratio of current costs of his deprtment's investigation into fraud to the benefits recouped; and what are the figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: My Department's investigation work was reorganised in 1984 and comparative figures for earlier years are not available. The ratios requested are as follows:

1984-85 1:2·4
1985-86 1:2·9
currently 1:4·0

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Paymaster General what has been the percentage change in the value of unentitled benefits recouped per Department of Employment investigating officer since 1979.

Mr. Lee: My Department's investiagtion work was reorganised in 1984 and comparative figures for earlier years are not available. There has been 46·7 per cent. increase in the value of unentitled benefits recouped per investigator between 1984 and 1986.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Paymaster General what has been the average change in the value of unentitled benefits recouped per Department of Employment investigating officer in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: My Department's investigation work was reorganised in 1984 and comparative figures for earlier years are not available. The average change in value for each year since is as follows:

1984 = £49,450
1985 = £73,000
1986 = £92,700

Trades Union Congress

Mr. Ewing asked the Paymaster General what was the cost to public funds of his attendance at the recent Trades Union Congress.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Approximately £220, including travelling costs and the costs incurred by my private secretary.

Tourism

Mr. Adley asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on recent trends in the tourism industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Jobs in the main tourism sectors have grown by 22 per cent. between 1975 and 1985 to just over 1·25 million, with some 43,000 new jobs created last year alone. Following record levels of incoming tourism in 1985, the number of visitors to the United Kingdom in the first seven months of 1986 fell by 7 per cent. compared with the same period last year. However, spending by overseas visitors has fallen by only 3 per cent. We have no firm predictions for the rest of the year, but the British tourist authority and British Airways have reported that forward bookings are back to normal levels. The Government firmly believe that tourism has excellent prospects of long-term growth and the decline earlier this year in visitors from North America was merely a temporary setback.

City Action Teams

Dr. Cunningham asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the first 18 months' work of the five city action teams, giving details of the officials and individuals involved in each team.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The city action teams have been successful at meeting their objectives of better co-ordinating Government action and help in the urban priority areas they cover. They pursue Government urban policy objectives to reduce the number of people in acute housing stress, reduce the number of derelict sites and void buildings and increase job opportunities and the employability of certain groups. Total Government provision for expenditure in the priority areas related to these objectives was estimated in 1985-86 to amount to around £670 million. The Government have provided an additional £1 million to the Newcastle-Gateshead city action team to provide pump-priming finance as part of its response to the recent shipbuilding closures in the north-east.

The teams comprise the regional directors.

Birmingham

Mr. A. J. Pryor, Director, West Midlands Region, Department of Trade and Industry (Leader); Mr. M. Raff, Director, West Midlands Region, Employment and Enterprise Group MSC; Mr. H. Ellis-Rees, CB, Director, Midlands Regions, Department of the Environment.

Liverpool

Mr. D. C. Renshaw, Director Merseyside Task Force, Department of the Environment (Leader); Mr. R. Phillips, Director, North West Region, Employment and Enterprise Group MSC; Mr. R. M. Anderson, Deputy Director, North West Region, Department of Trade and Industry.

London

Mr. P. McQuail, Director, London Region, Department of the Environment (Leader); Mr. J. B. Passingham, Acting Director, London Region, Employment and Enterprise Group MSC; Mr. A. Mantle, Director, London and South East Region, Department of Trade and Industry.

Manchester/Salford

Mr. M. Baker, Director, North West Region, Department of Trade and Industry (Leader); Mr. R. Phillips, Director, North West Region, Employment and Enterprise Group MSC; Mr. F. Kendall, Director, North West Region, Department of the Environment.

Newcastle/Gateshead

Mr. P. D. Carr, Director, North East Region, Employment and Enterprise Group MSC (Leader); Mr. A. Balls, Director, North East Region, Department of the Environment; Mr. R. Simpson, Director, North East Region, Department of Trade and Industry.

Loan Companies

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to seek to protect recipients of unemployment benefit from the activities of private loan companies who seek to pressurise them to take out a loan to clear accumulated debts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have received no complaints on this subject. It would not be appropriate for any Minister to attempt to interfere in the private financial circumstances of anyone including recipients of unemployment benefit. However, information about unemployment benefit claims is treated in confidence and is not disclosed to third parties without the written permission of the individual concerned.

CIVIL SERVICE

Rayner Reviews

38. **Mr. Favell** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what savings are expected in total from the Rayner reviews undertaken to date.

Mr. Luce: Savings already made as a result of Rayner scrutinies are now running at the rate of £300 million a year and further annual savings of £100 million are expected to be made.

Statistical Services

Mr. Frank Field asked the Minister for the Civil Service if she will detail the changes made by each Department following the recommendations in the statistical service, Cmnd. 8236, giving information on the changes made, the size of any reduction in that and the savings to public expenditure; and if she will list any other changes which the Government intend to make.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Minister for the Civil Service if she will update the Government's table "Estimated and Projected Expenditure and Manpower" which appears in "Government Statistical Services" Cmnd. 8236, by detailing which of the changes costed in the column, "Reducation May 1979 to April 1984", has taken place and in additional column, from changes still to take place.

Mr. Luce: By implementing the changes recommended in the White Paper, "Government Statistical Services" (Cmnd 8236), Departments had achieved total annual savings above the target of £26·5 million by April 1984. Departmental savings were nearly all close to or greater than the individual targets given in the table "Estimated and Projected Expenditure and Manpower". During the 1984-85 financial year further savings were made taking the annual savings to some £5 million above the target given in the White Paper.

Comparisons of departmental expenditure on the basis used in the White Paper have become increasingly imprecise due to developments in departmental financial management systems and reorganisation of some areas of work. It is no longer practicable therefore to distinguish current savings following directly from the recommendations in the White Paper.

The statistical service continues to seek economies and value for money. Future improvements are likely to depend increasingly on the exploitation of computers. Between the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86 further savings were found but were more than offset by increased investment in computer systems and other automatic equipment.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Labelling

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects mandatory fat labelling of food to take effect.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are still in the process of considering the many comments made on the proposed fat labelling of food regulations. We are also in consultation at official level with the Commission of the European Communities. We hope to be able to make a further statement on the proposals shortly.

Religious Slaughter

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now announce the Government's decision upon the matters contained in the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on religious slaughter of animals.

Dr. Donald Thompson: We are consulting interested organisations on the council's recommendations. The Government's response will be issued as soon as possible.

EC (Food and Wine Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of special sales of food agreed by the management committee of the European Economic Community; and if he will also detail the tonnages of various foodstuffs, the nations to which the sales have been made and the sale prices expressed in sterling per pound, over the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of food and wine respectively sold by the European Economic Community to the Soviet Union and East Europe, respectively in 1985.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Details of the quantities of the main foodstuffs exported in 1985 from the European Economic Community to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (excluding the Soviet Union) were contained in the reply of 13 May 1986 (column *443*): in total, these exports amounted to 7,693 thousand and 2,000 thousand tonnes respectively. Exports of wine in 1985 were 35 thousand and 28 thousand tonnes respectively.

Live Sheep Exports

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ban live sheep exports from the United Kingdom to Spain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department does not license exports of live sheep (nor any other food animals) to Spain. Spain has not yet implemented European Community safeguards on animal welfare in international transit and at the point of slaughter. We have urged and are urging the Spanish authorities to do so. I understand that they are now working on a measure to implement the relevant EC transport directives. We shall continue to apply pressure to the Spanish authorities until we are completely satisfied on both the transport and slaughter questions.

Ritual Slaughter

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the extent of ritual slaughter in the United Kingdom; what is his policy towards seeking amendments of the law with regard thereto; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service (Technology)

43. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is satisfied with progress in introducing new technology into the Civil Service.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. Existing computer systems are bringing about substantial improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of Civil Service operations; service levels to the public; and the job satisfaction of the staff. For the future, extensive plans for the introduction of further systems are well under way; and these will result in additional operational benefits. To achieve this, Civil Service expenditure on IT systems now exceeds £1,000 million annually.

Inland Revenue (Computerisation)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether an occupational requirement for the Inland Revenue national taxpayer tracing system has been completed; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the pilot scheme for the Inland Revenue national taxpayer tracing scheme including its duration and date of completion;

(3) if he will make a statement on the operation of advanced CAFS option in the Inland Revenue national taxpayer tracing system;

(4) if he will make a statement on the network of landline communications that will be used in the Inland Revenue national taxpayer tracing system;

(5) if he will make a statement on the functions for which the landline communications network of the Inland Revenue national taxpayer tracing system will be used.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The national taxpayer tracing system forms part of the Inland Revenue's computerisation programme. It is an index of taxpayers' names, addresses, national insurance numbers and tax reference numbers. It will enable Inland Revenue staff to establish, where necessary, which local office deals with a taxpayer's affairs. Access will be limited to authorised Inland Revenue staff.

The system makes use of an ICL product called CAFS which provides a means of searching through large quantities of information quickly.

An experimental system, intended to evaluate the technology, is currently operating at centre 1, the office dealing with pay-as-you-earn for Scotland. The intention, subject to the success of the experiment, and a further pilot in the west Midlands starting in the spring, is to extend the system to the remaining tax districts in the United Kingdom during 1987, using the Inland Revenue data communications network.

This network provides links between local offices and computer centres, and between those centres. It is a private network, not accessible from outside the Inland Revenue.

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional powers would be exercised by the Bank of England in the event of the United Kingdom joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Federal Excise Tax Relief

Sir William Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, under the provisions of the tax convention with the United States of America, S.I., 1980, No. 568, the federal excise tax relief available is limited to United Kingdom residents only.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes.

Civil Service (Union Activities)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy with regard to the provision of time off for trade union activities within the Civil Service, and in particular for the holding of workplace ballots.

Mr. Brooke: Reasonable requests for time off are allowed for trade union activities, including voting at the workplace in union elections, under the Civil Service national Whitley council agreement on facilities.

Value Added Tax

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the ratio of current employment costs of value added tax control officers to undeclared value added tax discovered and recouped; and what are the figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The ratio of current employment costs of value added tax control officers to underdeclared value added tax discovered is 1:6·9. This figure is for the financial year ending 31 March 1986. The corresponding figures for each financial year ending 31 March since 1979 are as follows:

	Ratio
1979	1:1·4
1980	1:1·7
1981	1:2·8
1982	1:2·9
1983	1:5·1
1984	1:5·4
1985	1:6·0

The amount of underdeclared tax actually recouped is not available. However, approximately 99 per cent. of all declared and assessed tax is collected each year.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many value added tax control officers are at present employed in England and Wales; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that separate figures for the number of value added tax control officers employed in England and Wales are not available and the information requested would be disproportionately expensive to calculate.

However, figures for the United Kingdom as a whole, for the financial year ending 31 March, are as follows:

	Number
1979	4,000
1980	3,700
1981	3,600
1982	3,800
1983	3,550
1984	3,650
1985	3,900
1986	4,040

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage rise in the value of underdeclarations of value added tax discovered per value added tax control officer since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The percentage rise since 1 April 1979 after allowing for inflation is 368 per cent.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average increase in the value of underdeclarations of value added tax discovered per value added tax control officer in each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The increases year by year in the average value of underdeclarations discovered by each value added tax control officer are as follows (figures relate to the financial year ending 31 March):—

	£
1980	7,450
1981	17,850
1982	3,950
1983	38,350
1984	4,850
1985	12,800
1986	22,300

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many posts in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise arise from the need to collect and administer value added tax.

Mr. Brooke: The number of full-time staff directly employed on the collection and administration of value added tax, including staff employed on fraud and revenue accounting was 10,849 at 31 March 1986. A further 275 posts have been allocated for 1986-87.

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the submission made to him by the Society of Civil and Public Servants and the Civil and Public Services Association about the staffing of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise on value added tax work; and what his response was.

Mr. Brooke: The staffing of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is kept under regular review and the unions' views are one of the elements to be taken into account in assessing the Department's manpower requirements for the years ahead.

Consumer Goods

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set up an inquiry into the extent to which building society advances, subject to tax relief, are used for the purchase of consumer goods; and if will he make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. The National Audit Office reported the results of an intensive examination of the Inland Revenue's operation of the MIRAS scheme earlier this year. In any case, building society advances are generally eligible for tax relief only if they are used for the purchase or improvement of the borrower's main residence. The NAO report showed that compliance check by the Inland Revenue revealed that only a very small proportion of loans had been receiving relief to which the borrower was not entitled.

European Monetary System

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of *(a)* the benefits and *(b)* the disadvantages which would accrue to the United Kingdom economy from linking sterling to the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A memorandum was submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee during the course of its inquiry into the financial and economic consequences of United Kingdom membership of the European Communities (13th report, Session 1984-85, volume II). I have nothing to add to the considerations discussed therein.

EC (UK Contribution)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the net contribution which the United Kingdom will make to the European Economic Community in 1986.

Mr. Brooke: The latest estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Economic Community's budget in 1986 is given in table 3 of the statement on the 1986 Community budget (Cmnd. 9907) published on 3 October. A copy is available in the House of Commons Library.

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of European Economic Community spending in 1986; and what is the maximum level of spending permitted under the revised own resources base as agreed at the Fontainebleau European Council.

Mr. Brooke: Community spending in 1986 is governed by the 1986 Community budget. The budget as adopted uses up virtually all the available Community own resources within the 1·4 per cent VAT ceiling. Details of the 1986 budget are given in the statement on the 1986 Community budget, Cmnd. 9907.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the anticipated yield, for the current tax year, of capital gains tax, including tax on companies' chargeable gains; and how much of that revenue would be lost if 6 April 1982 was to be taken as the new base date, so that when assets were acquired before that date they could be treated as having been actually acquired for the market value on that date, as well as having the indexation allowance based on that value and how much of the anticipated revenue would be lost if gains were fully indexed to April 1965.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimated yields in 1986-87 from capital gains tax and corporation tax on gains are £1,050 million and £800 million respectively. Possibly about one-half of this revenue would be lost it the tax base was limited to gains accruing from April 1982, or if gains were fully indexed to April 1965.

"Official Report"

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how long copies of *Hansard* are retained in print; if he will take steps to ensure that a stock of all editions is maintained for at least five years from the date of publication; what is the daily print run; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The print run of the Daily Part is normally 4,750 and larger print runs are made if justified by expected demand. HMSO also prints some 1,500 copies of the Weekly Hansard and around 1,000 copies of the Bound Volumes. To economise on expensive storage space, the daily and weekly editions are not retained beyond one year after the end of the Session, but the Bound Volumes are normally retained for 10 years.

Personal Incomes (Budget Effects)

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the gain per individual arising from each relevant component of the 1986 Budget, both at current prices and net of indexation for those at one half and three-quarters of average earnings, average earnings, and one and a half, two, five and 10 times average earnings; and if he will provide comparable figures for each budget since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986, c. 810]: The information is in the tables. Further information could be supplied only at disproportionate costs.

Gains (£ per week) from the main income tax proposals in the 1986 Budget

	Multiples of Average Earnings[1]						
	½	¾	*1*	1½	*2*	*5*	*10*
Single person (non-aged)							
Current Prices: change in							
basic rate[2]	0·61	1·15	1·68	2·74	3·31	3·31	3·31
personal allowances	0·75	0·75	0·75	0·75	1·13	1·50	1·50
higher rate thresholds	—	—	—	—	2·48	5·77	5·77
Total	1·36	1·90	2·43	3·49	6·92	10·58	10·58
Net of Indexation: change in							
basic rate[2]	0·61	1·15	1·68	2·74	3·31	3·31	3·31
personal allowances	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
higher rate thresholds	—	—	—	—	—	−3·08	−3·08
Total	0·61	1·15	1·68	2·74	3·31	0·23	0·23
Married man (non-aged)							
Current Prices: change in							
basic rate[2]	0·36	0·89	1·42	2·49	3·31	3·31	3·31
personal allowances	1·15	1·15	1·15	1·15	1·54	2·31	2·31
higher rate thresholds	—	—	—	—	1·92	5·77	5·77
Total	1·51	2·04	2·57	3·64	6·77	11·39	11·39
Net of Indexation: change in							
basic rate[2]	0·36	0·89	1·42	2·49	3·31	3·31	3·31
personal allowances	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
higher rate thresholds	—	—	—	—	—	−3·08	−3·08
Total	0·36	0·89	1·42	2·49	3·31	0·23	0·23

[1] Full time adult males (all occupations) forecast earnings for 1986-87 £212.70 per week.
[2] Assuming the changes to personal allowances and higher rate thresholds are made first.

Gains (£ per week), net of indexation, from the main income tax proposals[1] in all Budgets from 1979 to 1986, at 1986-87 income levels

	Multiples of Average Earnings[2]						
	½	¾	*1*	1½	*2*	*5*	*10*
Single person (non-aged) change in:							
basic rate[3]	2·46	4·58	6·71	10·97	13·23	13·23	13·23
personal allowances	2·22	2·22	2·22	2·22	3·03	5·59	5·59
reduced rate band	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38
higher rates and thresholds	—	—	—	—	3·00	97·64	342·24
Total	2·29	4·42	6·55	10·80	16·88	114·08	358·68
Married man (non-aged) change in:							
basic rate[3]	1·44	3·57	5·70	9·95	13·23	13·23	13·23
personal allowances	3·55	3·55	3·55	3·55	4·85	8·94	8·94
reduced rate band	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38	−2·38
higher rates and thresholds	—	—	—	—	1·84	91·80	336·40
Total	2·61	4·74	6·87	11·12	17·43	111·59	356·19

[1] Excluding the abolition of investment income surcharge.
[2] Full time adult males (all occupations) forecast earnings for 1986-87 £212.70 per week.
[3] Assuming the changes to personal allowances, the reduced rate band, and the higher rate threshold are made first.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Broadcasting Interference, Eastcote

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he has taken to stop the interference caused by an amateur radio transmitter to the reception of television and radio programmes and telephone conversations by the residents of Tudor Close, Eastcote, Middlesex; and whether he is still receiving complaints about such interference.

Mr. Butcher: Since it has proved impossible to resolve complaints from Tudor close residents, my right hon. Friend has proposed that the terms of the radio amateur's licence be varied. Solicitors acting for the amateur have made representations on his behalf and have expressed their intention to make further oral representations, but wish to have an expert to carry out certain tests before doing so. These tests will be carried out on 27 October in the presence of officials of the Department's radio investigation service. The amateur's station is closed down pending the outcome of the licence variation proceedings and no complaints have been received from local residents since this closure took effect on 8 October.

I hope that it will be possible to find an early and permanent solution to this difficult problem.

Railways (Noise)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made towards the draft European Community Directive on Noise Emission from railway vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The text of the draft directive in noise emissions from rail mounted vehicles was last discussed in Brussels at a Council working group held on 6 June 1984. At this meeting the United Kingdom presented a reasoned case why the text as proposed would not achieve its aim of improving the environment. It further argued that the major remedy for excessive railway noise lies in better track and rolling stock maintenance and attention to the topography of the line, all of which are within the power of member state actions without in any way presenting barriers to trade. An Article 100 directive was therefore unnecessary.

This argument was accepted by the EEC Commission and other member states with the result that this Directive is unlikely to be further pursued.

Copyright

Mr. Absc asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the retrospective protection to be given to United States copyright works by South Korea will also be extended to United Kingdom works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The United Kingdom is continuing to press Korea on this point. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade raised the matter with the Korean Vice-Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr. Hong, when he met him in London last week.

Coventry Climax

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the full purchase price for Coventry Climax was paid to British Leyland before Coventry Climax went into receivership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Rover Group's interests are fully protected. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further whilst the receiver is attempting to secure bids for the three businesses involved.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give a breakdown of the consortium which purchased Coventry Climax for British Leyland in 1981; what financial securities were offered to British Leyland as part of the sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Coventry Climax was acquired by Climax Holdings Ltd. I am not able to provide information beyond that which can be obtained from returns filed at Companies House, or otherwise released by the company. The Rover Group's financial interest is fully protected, and the details are a matter for the parties concerned.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the performance of Coventry Climax for 1975 to 1981 and 1981 to 1986, covering output, employment, turnover and profit/loss.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am not able to provide information beyond that which can be obtained from returns filed at Companies House or otherwise released by the company.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the agreed purchase price when Coventry Climax was privatised from British Leyland; on what date the sale was agreed; what arrangements were made for the payment to British Leyland of the agreed price; if those arrangements were honoured; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the reacquisition of Coventry Climax by British Leyland, and the restoration of manning levels to pre-1981 levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government have no such plans and have received no such proposals from the Rover Group.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to assist Coventry Climax following receivership.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My Department stands ready to consider any proposals put forward by the receiver or by any prospective purchaser of all or part of the business.

Steel

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the total volume of steel produced in the United Kingdom in the first nine months of 1986; and how this compares with the position for the first nine months of 1985 and 1979;

(2) what was the total volume of steel produced in 1985; and how he expects production in 1986 to compare with that figure.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available information is as follows. Production in first nine months of 1986 was depressed by the scheduled relining of the Redcar blast furnace at the British Steel Corporation's Teeside Works. This furnace returned to normal operations in September.

Total crude steel production in United Kingdom

Thousand tonnes

(calendar years)			*(first 9 months)*		
1979	*1985*	*1986*	*1979*	*1985*	*1986*
21,464	15,722	*(a)*	16,112	11,860	10,603

(a) No estimate available for full year.

Source: British Steel Corporation and British Independent Steel Producers' Association.

Self Changing Gears

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the agreed purchase price when Self Changing Gears was privatised from British Leyland; what arrangements have been made for the payment of that agreed price; what sanctions are available if those arrangements are not honoured; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The sale of Self Changing Gears Ltd. to the Cummins Engine Company was completed on 16 May 1986. The financial arrangements are matters for the parties concerned, and Government approval was not required.

Used Cars

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to amend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to *(a)* introduce specific controls to outlaw the practice of clocking secondhand cars, *(b)* close the loopholes which exist concerning sales of unroadworthy vehicles, *(c)* provide a licensing scheme for car auctions and *(d)* make the supply of pre-sales information a mandatory requirement on all sellers of used cars.

Mr. Howard: I have no present plans to amend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 in the manner suggested. The "clocking" of a used car odometer is already an offence under the 1968 Act. The sale of unroadworthy vehicles is governed by the Road Traffic Acts. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is currently considering suggestions for strengthening enforcement of that legislation. My own Department is considering a discussion paper prepared by enforcement authorities on the merits of licensing used car auctions. The introduction of a mandatory requirement to supply a pre-sales information report on used cars offered for sale has been considered by my Department on a number of occasions and rejected.

There would be major problems in devising criteria sufficiently objective to form the basis of a criminal offence and effective enforcement of the requirement would be likely to place a very heavy burden on enforcement resources.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take immediate steps to remove Crown immunity from those establishments run by his Department subject to consumer protection and environmental health laws; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No; our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits. If we have evidence of particular circumstances which give cause for concern I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances. This may, as in the case of hospital catering, lead to a reappraisal of Crown immunity.

Nissan

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion and value of plant and equipment being purchased for the Nissan car plant is manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information in the precise form requested is not available. However, up until September 1986, capital expenditure in the United Kingdom on the Nissan project has amounted to £43·5 million which represents 84 per cent. of the total expenditure so far.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has been involved in any discussions with the Nissan Motor Co. in the Houghton and Washington constituency regarding United Kingdom companies and tendering for materials in the manufacturing process.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1986]: Nissan's individual purchasing decisions are a commercial matter for the company themselves. However, it is the mutual objective of Nissan and the Government that the Sunderland project should contribute to the development of long-term collaboration between Nissan and the local components and other supplying industries. Nissan intend to provide the maximum practicable opportunity for local manufacturers to compete for orders and we naturally encourage this.

Fireworks

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps are being taken by his Department to educate children and parents about the dangers of fireworks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Loan Companies

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will review the law controlling the activities of private loan companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Consumer Credit Act 1974 provides both important safeguards for consumers who enter into credit agreements, and a system of licensing of loan companies, credit grantors and credit brokers administered by the Director General of Fair Trading. Other laws provide additional protection in this area, particularly against harassment of debtors. I believe that existing legislation provides a comprehensive framework of protection for consumers but if the hon. Member is aware of undesirable practices not covered by existing legal controls I should be willing to consider whether further action is desirable.

Merseyside

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what percentage of the total regional development grant received in the Merseyside special development area in each of the years 1981 to 1985, inclusive, was paid to firms investing *(a)* within the county of Merseyside and *(b)* within the city of Liverpool;

(2) what was the total payment of regional development grant to firms investing in the Merseyside special development area in each of the years 1981 to 1985, inclusive; and what were the comparable figures for those investing *(a)* within the county of Merseyside, and *(b)* within the city of Liverpool in each of those years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

United States

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the statistics on trade between the United Kingdom and the United States of America for the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom trade with the United States of America
£ millions

	Imports	*Exports*
1981	6·048	6·258
1982	6·624	7·475
1983	7·497	8·486
1984	9·368	10·159
1985	9·926	11·519

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Geevor Tin Mine

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is in a position to make a statement on the consultants' report on Geevor tin mine.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 8 April 1986, immediately after the mine had ceased production and the majority of the workers laid off, Geevor applied for selective financial assistance to fund a large project designed to improve its competitive position. This followed the sharp fall in the tin price after the International Tin Council ceased its operations on the tin market last October. After careful examination of this application, the Department of Trade and Industry met Geevor on 30 April and explained that the project did not put the company into a viable situation. The cost per job of supporting Geevor's project would have been very expensive indeed. To provide time for Geevor to prepare a revised application for assistance, the Department made a grant of £40,000, matched with a grant of £40,000 from Cornwall county council to pay for a month's care and maintenance of the mine during May. The company's revised application was rejected on 2 June, because the proposals still did not offer sufficiently robust prospects of commercial viability to justify financial assistance on the scale requested.

After further discussions with Geevor, the Department offered on 2 July to pay for an independend consultation to study whether the mine's production costs could be reduced to a competitive level. The company accepted the Department's offer on 14 August. The Department and Geevor agreed the terms of reference for the consultant's study, the DTI making available technical expertise and Geevor giving full support to the study.

The consultant's report was sent to Geevor on 13 October, when the Department also offered Geevor a joint meeting with the consultants do discuss the report. On 21 October, the chairman of Geevor informed the Department that as the minimum cost of producing tin at Geevor mentioned in the report, is equivalent to a tin price of over £8,200 per tonne he did not consider the matter should be pursued. The Department replied on 23 October saying that the Government accepted his view that the consultant's report did not provide the basis on which a viable plan for developing Geevor could be put forward. Accordingly, the Department informed the company, with regret, that financial assistance could not therefore be made available to Geevor, since viability is one of the essential requirements for providing selective financial assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1982.

Teats (Safety Regulations)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will review the safety regulations concerning materials used in the teats of babies' bottles and dummies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to ban the use of silicone substitutes in the teats of babies' bottles and dummies; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has any plans to seek the incorporation of World Health Organisation standards on the composition of materials used in babies' teats in a new British Standard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, Friday 24 October 1986]: I am aware of the recent publicity surrounding the possible choking hazard caused by babies' dummies and bottle teats made of silicone rubber and my Department is investigating. Meanwhile the main manufacturers and distributors have voluntarily withdrawn these products from sale.

The Babies' Dummies (Safety) Regulations 1978 lay down requirements on the materials and construction of dummies and rely on British Standard 5239: 1975 for technical specifications. Following the recent allegations the British Standards Institution is reviewing the present standard and has initiated research by the Laboratory of the Government Chemist. The research findings may indicate a need for revision of BS 5239. Before a revised BS specification is agreed account will be taken of any other relevant standards including those of the World Health Organisation.

At present, babies' bottle teats are not subject to either a British standard or to safety regulations but the need will be reviewed following the action on dummies.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Dundee are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit and how many are pensioners, heads of one-parent families, or unemployed.

Mr. Lyell: The city of Dundee is covered by two of the Department's offices, Dundee east and Dundee west, but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of the city. The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from those offices on 13 August 1986, the latest available figures, were as follows:

	Number
Unemployed	11,048
Over pension age	5,961
Others including one-parent families	7,214
Total	24,223

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of pensioners who would now qualify for supplementary benefits if it were not for the payment of occupational pensions.

Mr. Major: The best estimate which we can give, based on information from the family expenditure survey, is that in 1984 some 1·1 million pensioners would have qualified for supplementary pension if they had not been in receipt of an occupational pension.

War Disability Pension

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local housing authorities disregard wholly or partially war disability pension over and above the statutory £4 disregard, in assessing entitlement to rent rebate.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on 29 April at column *387*.

War Pensioners

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate *(a)* the number of war pensioners over retirement age and *(b)* the number of war pensioners over retirement age who receive supplementary benefit.

Mr. Lyell: It is estimated that at June 1986 about 133,000 war disablement pensioners including overseas war pensioners were over retirement age, and the information available suggests that about 1,500 were in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Elderly People (Care)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of places provided for the elderly in both public sector and in privately-owned establishments in each of the last seven years.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (General Managers)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the application of performance-related benefits for general managers in the National Health Service; if he will consider applying performance related benefits to other national Health Service workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The scheme whereby general managers in the National Health Service are eligible for performance-related pay is innovatory. We shall therefore monitor its operation closely before taking any decisions about extending its application to other staff in the service. Under the present scheme, the performance of general managers will be assessed in April 1987 against pre-agreed objectives. The first payments under the scheme will not be made until September 1987.

Christie Hospital, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action will be taken to correct the shortage of nurses at Christie hospital in South Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The North Western regional health authority is considering a request for funding extra nurses at Christie hospital. The right hon. Member may therefore wish to address his inquiries to the chairman of that authority.

Isobel Schwartz

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state *(a)* the terms of reference of the inquiry into Isobel Schwartz's death, *(b)* who is on the inquiry team, *(c)* whether it has begun its task, *(d)* when it is expected to complete its task, *(e)* whether its report will be published, and *(f)* who it will take evidence from.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend expects to be able to make an announcement about these matters shortly. The inquiry will be concerned with the care and after-care of Miss Sharon Campbell (who was charged with the murder of Miss Isobel Schwartz but found unfit to plead), and with the lessons to be learned. Its report will be published.

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the maternal deaths registered in England and Wales in 1979 to 1984 were of women born in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the Republic of Ireland, *(c)* the New Commonwealth, *(d)* India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, *(e)* the West indies, *(f)* Africa, *(g)* Gibralter, Malta and Cyprus, *(h)* new commonwealth countries not included in *(a)* to *(h)* and *(j)* country unstated; and if he will subdivide these into (i) direct maternal deaths, (ii) indirect maternal deaths, (iii) fortuitous maternal deaths and (iv) late maternal deaths.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Association of Young People in Care

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a decision has yet been reached on the application by the National Association of Young People in Care for financial assistance over the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Waiting Lists

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of district health authorities with long and acute waiting lists; and what is being done to reduce such waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: Details of the numbers of cases on National Health hospital waiting lists in each district health authority by specialty, degree of urgency and length of time on the list are given in the "Hospital In-Patient Waiting List at 30 September 1985, England, District Summaries", a copy of which is in the Library. My right hon. Friend has launched a drive to make major improvements in waiting lists and waiting times. As a first step the chairmen of regional health authorities have been asked to lead their districts in a review to establish the extent, nature and cause of any problems. They have been asked for reports by the end of October setting out action already taken and proposals to make a significant impact in the future.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the number of deaths attributable to drug abuse, particularly heroin addiction, in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and whether there is any discernible relationship between known or estimated length and level of addiction and age of death.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. R. J. Knight

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to decide on the application of Mr. R. J. Knight for a formal determination on whether Mr. Knight was in employed earners employment on 5 May 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Mr. Knight made a formal application on 27 March 1986 to my right hon. Friend to decide whether he was in employed earners employment. The application was subsequently amended by Mr. Knight on 15 June 1986. A formal inquiry will be held shortly when Mr. Knight will be invited to give further evidence so that the facts of the case can be determined.

The timing of the result of this inquiry cannot be predicted, but normally a final decision can be expected within six months.

Diabetics (Syringes)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make blood glucose monitoring equipment and plastic syringes available on National Health Service prescription for diabetics.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Pharmacies

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the average cost to the National Health Service of £50,000 per year for each new pharmacy opened excludes the costs of any pharmacy opened under the essential small pharmacy scheme.

Mr. Newton: No.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the detailed breakdown of the on average up to £50,000 a year cost to the National Health Service of each new pharmacy opened as stated by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, Baroness Trumpington, in the House of Lords on 15 October 1986, *Official Report*, column 832.

Mr. Newton: The breakdown of the average cost to the National Health Service of each new pharmacy is estimated at:

Labour costs: £25,000 to £30,000 per annum.
Overhead costs and profit: £15,000 to £20,000 per annum.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give an assurance that the new regulations for the proposed pharmacists' contract do not interfere with the existing Clothier arrangements;

(2) whether under the proposed pharmacists' contract, the family practitioners committee pharmacists' subcommittee considering applications for pharmacists' in rural areas would prejudice the existing Clothier arrangements for dispensing doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The proposed new arrangements for allocating National Health Service pharmacy contracts and the arrangements for regulating dispensing in rural areas (the Clothier arrangements) would operate entirely independently of each other.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an assurance that the enhanced essential small pharmacy scheme in the new pharmacists' contract is not applied to new incoming pharmacists that would replace existing dispensing doctors.

Mr. Newton: We have proposed no change to the existing arrangements which, in some circumstances, lead to a pharmacist providing a dispensing service that has previously been provided by a doctor and qualifying as an essential small pharmacy.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pharmacies dispensing less than 16,000 prescriptions will under the new proposed contract *(a)* be expected to apply for the essential small pharmacy scheme and *(b)* close.

Mr. Newton: The number of pharmacies expected to apply for enhanced payments under the new arrangements for the essential small pharmacies scheme is estimated at between 150 and 200.

There are no estimates of the number of pharmacies, dispensing fewer than 16,000 prescriptions a year, which may close after the new contract arrangements are introduced. The decision to relinquish a National Health Service contract is a commercial one for individual pharmacists in the light of their own particular circumstances.

Social Security Advisory Committee (Consultations)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what organisations are regularly consulted by the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council and the Occupational Pensions Board, respectively.

Mr. Major: When regulations are referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee, the committee generally initiates a consultation exercise in which all interested parties are invited to apply for copies of the consultation document and to submit representations. I understand that the committee maintains several lists of organisations with an interest in social security matters; a main list and six secondary lists grouped under subject headings. For each consultation exercise, organisations are selected from the secondary lists according to the subject of the regulations and a copy of the consultation document is sent to these selected organisations and to all those on the main list. All the lists are regularly updated and I have placed a copy of the current version in the Library, together with lists of the organisations regularly consulted by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council and the Occupational Pensions Board.

National Insurance Scheme

Mr. Michael Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many civil servants administer the national insurance scheme.

Mr. Lyell: Some 27,000 of the Department's staff administer the national insurance scheme. Of these, approximately 20,000 are engaged in the calculation and payment of benefit, the remaining 7,000 being concerned with the collection and recording of contributions.

Ancillary Staff (Reimbursement)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the working of the ancillary staff reimbursement scheme in the National Health Service with a view to ensuring equality of treatment between unrelated and related staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Government are currently reviewing the matter with the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association and we await its response to proposals we have made.

Pensioners

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the percentage increase in the state retirement pension, the pensioners' price index, and the retail price index since *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1974 taking into account his statement on benefit upratings on Wednesday 22 October.

Mr. Lyell: Figures have been given from November 1982 and November 1978 to reflect pension rates prevailing throughout most of 1983 and 1979 respectively. Since pension values can only realistically be compared when an uprating is implemented, the percentages in each case have been taken to July 1986.

	Percentage increase since:		
	November (a) 1982	*November (b) 1978*	*July (c) 1974*
State retirement pension (single person)	17·8	98·5	287·0
Pensioners price index [1]	16·9	84·8	263·9
Retail price index	17·9	90·0	250·7

The percentage increase in the state retirement pension to April 1987 in each case will be: *(a)* 20·2, *(b)* 102·6, *(c)* 295·0.

[1] Final quarter indices used for 1982 and 1978, second quarter indices for 1974 and 1986.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take to inform pensioners of their entitlement to supplementary benefits and heating allowances.

Mr. Lyell: The Department already makes considerable efforts in this respect. A leaflet about supplementary benefit is issued to everyone making a claim for state retirement pension. The pension order book also includes information about the supplementary pension scheme. In addition, the Department provides an advice and information service which includes leaflets, posters and a freephone service.

An age-related heating addition is payable to a householder whose family contains someone aged 65 or over. The claim form also asks for information to enable entitlement to other heating additions to be considered.

Nurses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take in the light of the report from the health advisory service indicating loss of morale among nurses working with the elderly and the mentally ill.

Mr. Newton: We received a copy of the health advisory service annual report earlier this month. The issues raised in it are under consideration by the Department.

Northern Region (Report)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take on the report from Professor Townsend on inequalities in health in the northern region.

Mr. Newton: The report "Inequalities in Health in the Northern Region" was commissioned by, and produced with the help of, the Northern regional health authority. I am sure that the authority is considering the report's implications, and will find it a useful aid in its own planning. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Northern regional health authority for further information.

Maternity Grant

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements will be made to ensure that families expecting their first child and not in receipt of supplementary benefit can receive a maternity grant from the social fund before the expected date of confinement.

Mr. Lyell: People receiving income support or family credit (supplementary benefit or family income supplement in 1987-88) will be eligible for a maternity payment from the social fund, subject to a capital rule of £500. As we made clear in chapter 4 of the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691), people who qualify for one of those benefits on the birth of their child will be able to receive a payment at that stage. We intend to allow claims for such payments up to three months after the date of confinement.

Low Income Families

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on 25 July, *Official Report*, columns *711-12*, he will give a detailed breakdown of the low income families tables, 1983, showing for each of the tables, and according to age and sex *(a)* the number of single persons under pensionable age, *(b)* those less than 20 years of age, *(c)* those between 20 and 29 years of age, *(d)* those between 30 and 44 years of age and *(e)* those over 45 years of age; and of the number over pensionable age: (i) those between 60 and 64 years of age, (ii) between 65 and 69 years of age, (iii) between 70 and 79 years of age and (iv) those over 80 years of age.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Geriatric Wards

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Security whether an adequate patient emergency bell alarm system is available in all the geriatric wards in the East Dyfed health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have been asked to reply. The provision of patient alarm systems is a matter for the health authority. I understand that all geriatric wards of East Dyfed health authority have patient/nurse call systems.

ENVIRONMENT

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the latest data on the expenditure to date of the Merseyside Development Corporation; and if these data can be divided as to whether the expenditure was undertaken on the Liverpool or Wirral side of the Mersey.

Mr. John Patten: Total Merseyside development corporation expenditure up to end September 1986 (the latest date for which accurate information is available) excluding staff, office and estate management expenditure was £112·860 million. Of this, £4·380 million has been spent in the Wirral part of the corporation's designated area.

Green Belt (Developments)

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the speech of the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldergrave), Minister of State, to the Confederation of British Industry conference on 14 October, indicating opposition to the development of retail store complexes in the green belt, represents Government policy.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. My speech reaffirmed long-established policy on the protection of green belts.

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to issue guidance to local planning authorities about the development of retail store complexes in the green belt.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's policy on development in green belt is set out in my Department's circular 14/84. The circular reaffirmed that there must continue to be a general presumption against inappropriate development within green belts.

Housing (Leicester)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money has been available to the Leicester city council for the provision and for the improvement, respectively, of public sector housing in each of the last 10 years for which records are available.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Council Houses (Rent and Rates)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average council house rent including rates in 1979; and what is the average rent and rates payment at the present time.

Mr. Tracey: The estimated average unrebated weekly rent for local authority dwellings in England was £6·41 in April 1979 and £16·36 in April 1986. Estimates of average rate bills for local authority dwellings are not available, but they are believed to be somewhat lower than the averages for all domestic properties, which are £3.00 weekly for 1979-80 and £7·70 for 1986-87.

County Hall (London)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation will take place with the London borough of Lambeth on *(a)* the future use of county hall and *(b)* the process of sale of county hall to private developers.

Mr. Chope: These are matters for the London residuary body to decide. Any change of use of county hall would be subject to statutory planning processes requiring in the first instance submission of planning application to the London borough of Lambeth.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the future use of county hall.

Mr. Chope: Any change of use of county hall would be subject to statutory planning processes. Comment by my

right hon. Friend could prejudice his consideration of any planning applications that might come before him in due course.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether local authorities which sell land or buildings previously used for educational purposes to trusts running city technology colleges will be permitted to retain and use all the proceeds from such sales without penalisation through the rate support grant.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by what process the annual report and account of the London residuary body for 1985-86 will be presented to Parliament.

Mr. Chope: In accordance with the provision of section 79(5) of and schedule 13(10) to the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why the London borough of Westminster was chosen as paymasters for the London residuary body during the period 1985-86; what discussion on this matter took place with his Department; and what other London boroughs were offered the task;

(2) if charges made by Westminster council for its services to the London residuary body since August 1985 will be included in the annual report of the London residuary body.

Mr. Chope: These are matters for the London residuary body, which have not been the subject of discussions with the Department.

Councillor Margaret Hodge

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why councillor Margaret Hodge was first approached to join the London residuary body; and why she was not subsequently appointed to membership of it.

Mr. Chope: I am not aware of any approach to Councillor Hodge by my right hon. Friend or his predecessors in connection with the London residuary body. Councillor Hodge recently wrote to my right hon. Friend asking to be appointed as a member. She was informed that he sees no need at present to make further appointments to the body.

South Yorkshire Residuary Body

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effects of a decision by the South Yorkshire residuary body to transfer factories from the ownership of former county councils to the private sector on the continuing eligibility of such factories for grants from the European regional development fund.

Mr. Chope: Assets transferred to the private sector are not normally eligible for grants from the European regional development fund.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the South Yorkshire residuary body to transfer all the former county council's factories to the district councils under section 67 of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Chope: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance has been given by his Department to the South Yorkshire residuary body in relation to proposed sales on the open market of factories constructed with European regional development grant funds; what has been the response to this guidance of the South Yorkshire residuary body; what further action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Property guidance to all residuary bodies was issued by my Department on 7 August. The South Yorkshire residuary body is aware of the implications for ERDF funding of the sale of industrial estates on the open market.

Housing Investment Programme (Barnsley)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now enter into talks with the local authority in Barnsley to increase its housing investment programme allocation for 1987-88.

Mr. Tracey: The Government's public expenditure plans for 1987-88 have not been finalised and therefore housing investment programme allocations for that year have not yet been made. Discussions about individual local authorities' housing needs take place each year with the Department's officials at regional level before HIP allocations are made. It would not be possible for the Secretary of State to conduct these meetings for all 366 English local authorities himself.

Portsdown Park, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why the Minister responsible for making the decision with regard to Portsmouth city council's proposal to refurbish the Portsdown Park estate made contact with members of the Conservative group on Portsmouth city council and officers of the council on 3 March with regard to the city's proposed refurbishment of the Portsdown Park estate; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what advice Portsmouth city council was given by his Department on ways to refurbish Portsdown Park which would not require Government approval;

(3) what correspondence passed between the Department and Portsmouth city council about Portsdown Park other than the decision letter dated 4 March; what telephone conversation took place on 3, 4 and 6 March; and if he will make a statement;

(4) why the Minister dealing with Portsmouth's application to refurbish the Portsdown Park estate advised that he could be surcharged or challenged in other ways if he approved Portsmouth's application.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Loan Companies

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will request local authorities to take steps to prevent private loan companies from operating on

their housing estates to pressurise tenants into taking out loans with them to exercise their right to buy their houses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce legislation prohibiting private loan companies from offering money to council house tenants to provide a deposit for the purchase of their houses under the Housing Act.

Mr. Tracey: No: council tenants must be free to take their own decisions about borrowing, but they should, of course, think carefully whether they can afford to buy. Tenants with the right to buy have the right to a mortgage from the landlord, subject to an income test. If the tenant is not entitled to a mortgage sufficient to enable him to buy outright, he has the option of purchase of shared ownership terms. I hope tenants will consider that option rather than extra borrowing.

Urban Aid Programme

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the maximum length of time which voluntary and community group projects can be financially supported under the urban aid programme in England and Wales; and how many projects are currently in their final year.

Mr. Tracey: Approvals for urban programme grant to projects run by voluntary or community groups in England are normally given for four years, although in certain cases funding may be renewed for up to two years. The urban programme is supporting about 3,450 such projects in 1986-87, of which about 1,000 are in their final year. The urban programme in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Liverpool Inner Area Partnership Committee

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how often the Liverpool inner area partnership committee in each year has met since its inception; when it last met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The partnership committee met seven times between its inception and 1981. Following the meeting in July 1981 the setting up of the Merseyside task force with the associated discussions between Ministers and Merseyside together with the regular discussions at official level has made the formal partnership mechanism less necessary.

Merseyside Task Force

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings he has had with the Merseyside task force this year; what matters were discussed; what plans it has for the future economic development of Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: There are regular contacts between Ministers and officials of the Merseyside task force on all aspects of the Department's business in Merseyside. The task force will continue its role in helping to promote the regeneration of Merseyside.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received in response to the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government"; what percentage have been *(a)* broadly favourable *(b)* broadly unfavourable and *(c)* neutral to the proposals; whether the representations are likely to lead to his modifying the proposals; and if he will place such representations in the Library.

Dr. Boyson: Excluding those concerned exclusively with capital expenditure, my right hon. Friend has so far received more than 900 responses to the Green Paper. The deadline for submission of responses is 31 October, and we are still receiving representations. We shall produce a detailed analysis of the responses as soon as possible after the consultation period has ended.

DEFENCE

Grouse Season (Opening)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost incurred on the race down the Thames of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd battalions of the Parachute Regiment to deliver grouse to the Savoy hotel on 12 August; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Red Devils parachute display team, which is drawn from the three battalions of the Parachute Regiment, met the expenses concerned and there was no expenditure from Defence Votes. Its efforts raised £11,000 in sponsorship for the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association and £11,000 for the Red Devils appeal fund towards the cost of its replacement aircraft.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of the flight from Blackpool airport to the Royal hospital, Chelsea, by the Red Devils on 12 August, including the parachute drop of grouse.

Mr. Freeman: The Red Devils parachute display team used its own aircraft, which is financed from its own funds. There was no expenditure from Defence Votes.

United States-United Kingdom Lines of Communication Agreement

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the classified status of the United Kingdom-United States lines of communication agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No.

New Zealand

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet his New Zealand counterpart; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Younger: I last met the New Zealand Defence Minister, Mr. O'Flynn, in London on 18 September, when we discussed a number of matters of mutual interest. We have no plans to meet again in the immediate future.

Falklands War

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his talks with the media on lessons to be learned from the Falklands war.

Mr. Stanley: Consultations with the media are continuing on the lines indicated in the Government's response in Cmnd. 9499 to the report of the study group on censorship.

Contractors (Fraud)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many cases of procurement fraud by defence contractors have been discovered in the last year; and what was the value.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the last year a number of possible instances of fraud by defence contractors have been investigated. In five cases the Ministry of Defence police have referred the papers to the appropriate prosecution service. The value of these cases is about £0·5 million.

Chile

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there have been any collaborative military exercises with Chile since June 1982.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Cyprus

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual cost of the sovereign base areas in Cyprus; and what proportion of this is incurred in foreign currency.

Mr. Stanley: The cost of the sovereign base areas alone is not available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. However, the net cost to the defence budget of British armed forces in Cyprus as a whole is estimated to be £92 million in 1986-87 of which some 80 per cent. is likely to be incurred in foreign currency.

Mr. Andrew Dunlop

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence in what capacity Mr. Andrew Dunlop is working for his Department; what is his Civil Service status; if the normal rules of establishment have been waived in each case; for what duration he is employed; what are his duties; what payments he will receive from public funds; what is his grade; and what access to classified documents he is to be given.

Mr. Younger: Mr. Andrew Dunlop has been appointed as my special adviser. His role is to assist me on defence policy matters generally, with particular reference to their political aspects. His appointment has been made on the same basis as that of other special advisers, which is that for the period of his appointment he is a civil servant and is subject to the appropriate terms and conditions of service in force in the Civil Service. He will be paid by the Ministry of Defence at a rate on the grade 7 (principal) pay scale, currently £16,899 per annum. Mr. Dunlop has been subject to positive vetting and he will have access to official documents on a need-to-know basis.

Iran

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of *(a)* the Iranian and *(b)* the Iraqi military forces have received training in the United Kingdom in each of the years 1981 to 1986; and what was the nature of their training.

Mr. Freeman: Some members of the Iraqi armed forces received training at Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom in each of the years 1981 to 1986. A small number of Iranian military personnel also received training at defence establishments in the United Kingdom from 1981 until the financial year 1983-84. It is not our policy to reveal the details of training provided to foreign armed forces since such agreements are confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Governments concerned.

Written Answers to Questions

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NATIONAL FINANCE

Group of Five

Mr. Dixon asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet his colleagues in the Group of Five.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Finance Ministers of the Group of Five nations meet from time to time.

Official Report (Price)

Mr. Hind asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the price of the *Official Report*.

Mr. Peter Brooke: Following a review by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, I have authorised an increase of 45p in the price of the daily part, with corresponding increases in the prices of weekly parts, indexes, Standing Committee debates, bound volumes and subscription rates. The scale of charges for reprints of Members' speeches appearing in the *Official Report* will also be raised. Despite these increases, *Hansard* will still receive a substantial subsidy.

ENERGY

British Coal

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give figures for total deep mine revenue output, number of pits, average men on colliery books and average revenue output per man shift for the latest convenient date and for February 1984 for each of British Coal's areas, in the same manner as in the reply of the Minister of State to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 24 July, *Official Report*, column 358.

Mr. David Hunt: I am advised by British Coal that the total deep mine revenue output, number of pits, average men on colliery books and average revenue output per man shift for each area for the fiscal month of September 1986 and the fiscal month of February 1984 were as follows:

Area	*Revenue Output (000 tonnes)*	*Number of Pits*	*Average Man-power*	*OMS (tonnes)*
Four weeks ended 18 February 1984				
Scotland	373	9	13,337	1·96
North East (Revised)	850	16	23,065	2·20
North Yorkshire	507	12	13,132	2·63
Doncaster	440	10	13,495	2·23
Barnsley	349	16	13,904	1·71
South Yorkshire	507	15	14,162	2·37
North Derbyshire	422	9	10,648	2·54
North Nottinghamshire	949	14	16,865	3·39
South Nottinghamshire	478	11	13,028	2·28
South Midlands	528	14	12,982	2·40
Western	542	17	18,660	2·08
South Wales	527	28	20,359	1·65
Five weeks ended 27 September 1986				
Scotland	341	6	6,664	2·35
North East	1,019	9	15,745	3·01
North Yorkshire	1,507	20	19,080	4·10
South Yorkshire	1,082	19	17,089	3·45
North Derbyshire	556	8	8,144	3·40
Nottinghamshire	1,737	22	24,996	3·42
South Midlands	454	9	8,021	2·87
Kent	42	3	1,328	1·41
Western	889	12	13,669	3·18
South Wales	587	16	12,229	2·33

DEFENCE

NATO—Warsaw Pact (Balance of Forces)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what use his Department makes of the United States system of armoured division equivalents in assessing the balance of forces between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The system of armoured division equivalents is not used in the assessment of the balance of the military forces of East and West, as presented in successive "Statements on the Defence Estimates". The difficulty of calculating the balance using this and other methods is described on pages 58-59 of volume I of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986".

Gibraltar

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the ground-to-air missiles installed in Gibraltar during the crisis between the United States of America and Libya have been dismantled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: It is not our practice, for security reasons, to comment on the detailed factors governing the deployment of defence assets at particular locations.

Single Role Minehunter

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to place further orders with Vosper Thorneycroft for the single role minehunter.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The timing of future minehunter orders has yet to be determined.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Companies (Investigations)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will describe the process under which applications for investigations of companies under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985 are considered for approval or refusal; what criteria are used; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will describe the sources and nature of applications made for investigations of companies under

section 447 of the Companies Act 1985 and similar applications made under former legislation; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what statistics are available about investigations undertaken by his Department's companies investigation branch in recent years, including statistics of the outcomes of such investigations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the "Handbook of the Companies Inspection System" and the annual reports on companies, both published through Her Majesty's Stationary Office, which give information and statistics concerning the use of section 447 of the Companies Act 1985 and its predecessor, section 109 of the Companies Act 1967.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a list showing the numbers of staff, by grade, in his Department's companies investigation branch in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: In January the Secretary of State announced increases in the staff of the companies investigation branch to take place over a period of two years. Those increases are being implemented.

Companies investigation branch

Staff in post on 1 April for each of the years 1980 to 1986 inclusive and, additionally for 1986 staff in post at 21 October 1986 and the branch complement for 1986-87

	1 April 1980	*1 April 1981*	*1 April 1982*	*1 April 1983*	*1 April 1984*	*1 April 1985*	*1 April 1986*	*21 October 1986*	*Complement 1986-87*
Inspector of Companies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Principal Examiner	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Chief Examiner	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	7
Senior Examiner	14	14	13	14	14	14	14	16	20
Examiner	5	5	4	4	4	3	5	5	8
Executive Officer	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1 + HEO
Clerical Officer	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	5	5
Clerical Assistant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Personal Secretary	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
TOTAL	33	33	30	31	32	31	32	38	47

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will describe and name the management information systems used in his Department's companies investigation branch, stating the timing and contents of each report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The companies investigation branch uses internal systems and controls to assist management. These are reviewed regularly. Broadly, these systems record details of applications for investigation of companies, and monitor progress of casework and expenditure, on monthly, quarterly and annual bases.

The annual report on companies published through Her Majesty's Stationery Office gives detail of the handling of applications, and expenditure.

Ault and Wiborg, Perivale

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the Ault and Wiborg paint factory, Perivale.

Mr. Howard: The proposed acquisition by Berger, Jenson and Nicholson Ltd. of certain assets of the Ault and Wiborg Group plc is currently being examined by the Office of Fair Trading. If the proposal is found to qualify for investigation under the terms of the Act, my right hon. friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will decide, in the light of advice from the Director General of Fair Trading, whether it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what contact his Department has had with the Association of British Insurers on matters relating to acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department has, as part of its normal functions, kept in touch with the Association of British Insurers about the issues raised by the spread of AIDS for the life insurance industry, those seeking life assurance and more generally.

Wine (Sale)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he has now discussed with members of the licensed trade the introduction of legislation to enforce the sales of wine by measured glass and by reference to volume as agreed with the trade on the voluntary code of practice; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what the most recent survey shows of the compliance of the code of conduct on the sales of wine displaying the price and precise volume by the licensed trade.

Mr. Howard: A local authority survey submitted to the Department last autumn showed that 43·4 per cent. of premises visited were using glass sizes agreed in accordance with the provisions of the voluntary code of practice: 16·2 per cent. of premises were clearly indicating both the quantity and price of wines offered for sale by the glass.

The Department has discussed with the code's trade sponsors the options for controlling sales of wine by the glass and has invited them to suggest ways in which voluntary adherence to the code can be improved.

Beer

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's recent work to ensure that beer is served in full measure and that the head of froth is not paid for;

(2) what regulations are being discussed between his Department and the brewing and licensing trades to establish lined beer glasses in order to facilitate the serving of fair and full measures, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Department has been considering representation on the "froth on beer" issue for some time. In the Department's view a combination of self-regulation by the trade and revised regulations for capacity measures offers the best way forward. A consultation paper on proposed new regulations was, therefore, circulated to interested parties last April. Copies are available in the House of Commons Library. In parallel with this initiative the Brewers' Society has been preparing guidance notes for publicans on the dispensing of draught beer.

The comments received on the consultation paper are currently being considered by the Department and a statement on possible changes to the regulations would not, therefore, be appropriate at this stage.

Furniture (Fire Resistance)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to review the regulations covering the fire resistance of fabrics used in the manufacture of household furniture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1986]: The present regulations relating to upholstered furniture specify resistance to smouldering cigarettes and labelling to indicate the result of a match flame test, not for the fabric alone, but for the combined upholstery. As stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) on 1 July, at column 465, the industry is developing a code of practice, which it is to complete not later than November 1987, on which legislation introducing a requirement for match flame resistance will be based. I have no other plans to introduce legislation on the fire resistance of the fabrics used in the manufacture of furniture.

Coventry Climax Ltd.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the agreed purchase price when Coventry Climax was privatised from British Leyland; on what date the sale was agreed; what arrangements were made for the payment to British Leyland of the agreed price; if those arrangements were honoured and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986]: BL (now the Rover Group) disposed of Coventry Climax Ltd. on 9 December 1981. The financial arrangements are matters for the parties concerned. I can tell the hon. Member that BL's 1981 report and accounts show that this was one of a number of assets sold in that year. The value of the combined sales totalled £53 million.

Fireworks

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps are being taken by his Department to educate children and parents about the dangers of fireworks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986]: This year the Government are mounting a vigorous firework safety campaign, the aim of which is to persuade all users of fireworks, and especially children, to follow the firework code. Parents are being encouraged to take their children to organised displays rather than to set off fireworks at home, and advised, if they do still prefer private parties, to take special care. In addition, shopkeepers are being warned that if they sell fireworks to the under-16s they are liable to a £2,000 fine or three months imprisonment, and the police have been asked to be particularly alert to the problem of fireworks being thrown about in the street.

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc (Report)

Q62. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the fourth report from the Defence Committee on Westlands, she will dismiss Mr. Charles Powell from her Private Office.

The Prime Minister: No.

Princethorpe, Rugby

Q94. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Princethorpe, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Prime Minister if she will urge the United States Administration not to breach the SALT 2 treaty limits by installing this November the 131st B-52 strategic bomber with nuclear tipped cruise missiles without any compensating reductions in other strategic launch systems; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I told the House on 3 June, we regard it as important that the SALT 2 agreement continues to be observed by both sides.

Missiles

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Prime Minister if she will invite the Administration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to negotiate the abolition of their anti-ballistic missile systems sited around Moscow in exchange for a reduction in the number of Trident missile-based nuclear warheads planned for deployment by Her Majesty's Government; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

Mr. Hirst asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

EMPLOYMENT

Cash and Running Costs Limits

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1986-87

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made.

The cash limit on class VII, vote 1 will be reduced by £9,373,000 from £1,309,496,000 to £1,300,123,000. This is mainly due to reduced expenditure on the community programme and the new workers scheme, reflecting slightly lower than anticipated take up of both schemes.

The cash limit on class VII, vote 3 will be increased by £5,000,000 from £62,005,000 to £67,005,000 to make additional provision for publicising Department of Employment group services. The reduction on vote 1 offsets the cost both of this increase and of increased expenditure of £4 million by the unemployment benefit service, which the Department of Employment operates as the Department of Health and Social Security's agent. The £4 million increase is matched by receipts from the DHSS (class XV, vote 5). Further increased expenditure of £2,650,000 by the UBS on class VII, vote 3 for claimant advisory work is also met by receipts from class XV, vote 5.

As a result of the overall increase of £6,650,000 in the operating costs of the UBS, the Department of Employment's gross running costs limit on class VII, vote 3 is increased from £384,588,000 to £391,238,000 and consequently the total for the Department of Employment group as a whole is increased from £885,248,000 to £891,898,000.

There is no net increase in public expenditure resulting from these changes.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

72. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to ensure that special interests, women, ethnic minorities and the disabled will be adequately represented on the proposed National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The membership of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications was announced on 1 October 1986. Members were appointed on a personal basis and not as representatives of particular bodies or interests. I am concerned that the council should take full account in its work of the interests of women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and others with special needs, and I am confident that it will establish effective arrangements for doing so.

73. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Paymaster General when he expects the new National Council for Educational Qualifications to be operative.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications was established as a company limited by guarantee on 17 September. It held its first council meeting on 13 October.

New Businesses (Avon)

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Paymaster General what has been the net change in the number of businesses in the county of Avon between 1979 to 1983.

Mr. Trippier: The number of businesses registered for VAT in the county of Avon is estimated to have increased by around 2,000 between the end of 1979 and the end of 1983.

Restart

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what percentage of those starting on the restart programme complete the full week.

Mr. Lee: On the basis that this question relates to the one week restart course, which is part of the restart programme, the information is not available in the form requested. However, the average attendance on restart courses is just over four days per participant.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if he proposes to increase the period spent on the restart programme from one week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: On the basis that this question relates to the restart course, which is part of the restart programme, there are no plans to increase the length of restart courses. However, participants may return on one day a week, for up to 13 weeks for further support and guidance.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what follow-up his Department proposes to conduct to assess the effect of the restart programme on its participants.

Mr. Lee: A full evaluation of the restart pilot programme will be available later this year. In addition, the Manpower Services Commission will conduct a study of a sample of restart participants in order to follow their experiences during the 12 months following their restart counselling interview.

Unemployment and Training (Swindon)

Mr. Coombs asked the Paymaster General what was the total number of people benefiting from special employment and training measures at the latest available date in the Swindon constituency; and if he will list the measures and the numbers affected in each case.

Mr. Lee: Some 3,400, although because of the various bases on which local information is collated an unknown proportion will be in areas outside the Swindon constituency. The numbers in each scheme are as follows:

	Numbers
Adult training	231
Community industry	84
Community programme	1,185
Enterprise allowance scheme	491
Job release schemes	133
Job splitting scheme	1
New workers scheme	153
YTS	1,095
Young workers scheme	10

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East of 18 February column 181 regarding YTS qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: YTS schemes are making use of a wide range of existing vocational qualifications. The YTS certification board has now been established and has begun work on the approval vocational qualifications suitable for use in YTS. We intend that assessments within YTS should come within the new vocational qualifications framework to be set in place by the recently established National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of people unemployed in Leeds metropolitan district council area for the last year for which figures are available; and what is the number of people unemployed who are *(a)* under 25 years old, *(b)* 25 to 40-years-old and *(c)* 41 to 60-years-old.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of claimants at 10 July 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available.

Unemployment claimants in the Leeds local authority district area

	Number
Age under 25 years	16,062
Age 25 to 39	13,655
Age 40 to 59	12,475
All ages	43,085

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General how many people in Leeds metropolitan district council area have been unemployed for *(a)* less than six months, *(b)* six months to one year, *(c)* one year to two years and *(d)* over two years.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of claimants for the durations requested as at 10 July 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available.

Unemployment claimants in the Leeds local authority district area

	Number
Under six months	16,795
Six months to one year	8,133
One year to two years	6,670
Over two years	11,487

Nove Leather Company (Dispute)

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General what efforts the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service has made to end the official union dispute with the Nove Leather company in Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that ACAS has been conciliating in this dispute and remains available to assist the parties.

Claimants (Tests)

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General what action will be taken in line with the report of the Public Accounts Committee to strengthen tests of the availability of unemployed claimants for work.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement earlier today.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

European Community Legislation

Mr. Alexander asked the Lord Privy Seal what percentage, in total and by type, of the European Economic Community regulations, directives and other decisions of the Council of Ministers brought before the House in 1985 were brought before the House for debate with a recommendation for a decision.

Mr. Biffen: Four hundred and thirty European Community documents incorporating proposals by the Commission were deposited in Parliament in 1985. Of these, 283 (66 per cent.) were proposals for Council regulation, 63 (15 per cent.) proposals for Council directives, and 84 (19 per cent.) proposals for Council decisions. In the same year, following recommendations from the Commons Select Committee on European Legislation, 43 documents—some of which would have been deposited before 1985—were debated either on the Floor of the House or in Standing Committee, of which 25 (58 per cent.) concerned regulations, 16 (37 per cent.) directives, and two (5 per cent.) were decisions. Three proposals (7 per cent.) of those debated) were formally adopted by the Council of Ministers before the House had debated them. Two of these had been agreed by the Committee as being suitable for adoption before debate by the House; as for the third, the Chairman of the Commons Select Committee on European Legislation was informed of the position in accordance with the procedure laid down in the House of Commons resolution of 30 October 1980.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Sir John Biggs-Davison and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* Protestant and *(b)* Roman Catholic tenants of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, respectively, have been moved to other accommodation since November 1985 in consequences of sectarian and terrorist violence.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am informed by the chairman that the Housing Executive has no record of the religious persuasion of its tenants or applicants, but the executive is aware of 179 cases where its tenants or the occupants of houses in the private sector have been intimidated since 10 July 1986 and have since been rehoused.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Grain Store, Coventry

Mr. Park asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of tonnes of grain, in

addition to what is already in store, which can be taken into store in Red Lane in the Coventry, North-East constituency.

Mr. Gummer: Information on individual stores is not given on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Food Labelling

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announced his modified proposals on the labelling of fats and other nutrients.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are still in the process of considering the many comments made on the proposed Fat Labelling of Food Regulations, and on the guidelines for fuller nutrition labelling. We hope to be able to make a further announcement shortly.

Fishing Fleet (Decommissioning Scheme)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (1) what gross tonnage has left the fishing fleets in England, Wales and Scotland as a result of the decommissioning scheme;

(2) how much cod, haddock, saithe and whiting was caught and landed by vessels which are no longer active in the fleet by virtue of their having been decommissioned since the decommissioning scheme was introduced.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (1) how many fishing vessels have left the fleets in England, Wales and Scotland due to factors other than decommissioning in the period since 1981;

(2) how many of the owners who received money to decommission fishing vessels have subsequently purchased replacement fishing vessels;

(3) how many fishing vessels have been decommissioned in England, Wales and Scotland since the decommissioning scheme was introduced.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Ritual Slaughter

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the extent of ritual slaughter in the United Kingdom; what is his policy towards seeking amendment of the law with regard thereto; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986]: Statistics of animals slaughtered by religious methods are not maintained centrally. However our most recent estimate is that less than 1 per cent. of total animals, including poultry, slaughtered in Great Britain are slaughtered under the exemption from prior stunning. A further 2 per cent. are slaughtered according to religious law after being stunned. Government policy on religious slaughter is under review in response to the recommedations of the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail the numbers of claims pending from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for each of the last five years; and if he will state the average length of time it has taken for settlements to be made in each of these years.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of cases before the board at the end of each financial year for the last five years were:

	Cases pending
31 March 1982	28,700
31 March 1983	32,100
31 March 1984	34,300
31 March 1985	41,800
31 March 1986	51,500

Information is not available about the average time taken to deal with applications; the table gives the proportions of cases resolved by the board within 12 months of application.

Percentage of cases resolved within twelve months of application

Financial year	
1981-82	81·9
1982-83	76·3
1983-84	75·3
1984-85	74·5
1985-86	[1]69·6

[1] Provisional.

Prisoners (Court Hearings)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken following the complaints by a London magistrate of the ability by some London prisons to produce prisoners for court hearings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are discussing with the courts and other parties concerned how this problem might be tackled. In the longer term, we are taking forward the recommendations of the court escort scrutiny for rationalising the Prison Service's escorting commitment to courts, we are preparing plans for the more efficient deployment of prison staff across the service as a whole and we are considering the proposals made in the scrutiny report for changes in magistrates' courts procedure which would have the effect of easing the burden on the Prison Service.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions so far in the current year prisons have not been able to ensure the presence of prisoners due to attend court hearings of their cases.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available centrally.

Police Custody (Deaths)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the inquiries which have taken place into the death of people while in police custody during each of the last five years;

(2) what has been the number of people who have died in police custody in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of persons who died in police custody (or otherwise with the police) during the years 1981-85 is contained in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary — HC 463 (1981), HC 15 (1982), HC 528 (1983), HC 369 (1984), HC 437 (1985) and for those within the Metropolitan police district, in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis (Cmnd. 8569, 8928, 9268, 9541 and 9790). There have been no inquiries under section 32 of the Police Act 1964 into any death in police custody in the last five years. Information as to the number of investigations following a complaint against the police, or internal police inquiries, undertaken as a result of a death in police custody is not separately recorded. The number of inquests and inquest verdicts is dealt with in the annual reports.

Prison Officers (Attacks)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of attacks by inmates in Her Majesty's prisons against prison officers in each of the last three years.

Mr. Mellor: Information on offences against prison discipline of gross personal violence or assault on a prison officer is given annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 9(g), (h) and (i) of the latest issue, for 1985, (Cmnd. 9903)).

Prisoners (Working Arrangements)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what record is kept by prisons as to the number of inmates who are locked up each day due to the lack of prison work.

Mr. Mellor: Governors are required to manage the resources available to them so as to enable inmates to spend the maximum possible time out of their cells in employment, education, individual or collective recreation, or other activities. Lack of prison work would not therefore necessarily lead to inmates being locked up and governors are not required to keep a separate record of when locking up is directly due to lack of prison work.

Voting Rights

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prohibit citizins of the Republic of Ireland, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Cyprus, India, New Zealand, Tanzania and Zimbabwe voting in local elections in Great Britain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to introduce such legislation.

Mr. Sukhjinder Singh

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department received a passport application in respect of Mr. Sukhjinder Singh of 132 Brewery Road, SE18; when the passport was finally issued; why there was a delay in considering the application; and why letters written on behalf of the applicant on 27 February and 16 June went unanswered.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Member has kindly supplied further information to help to identify the case. I shall write to him as soon as possible.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to authorise the reimbursement from public funds of legal and other expenses properly incurred by police officers against whom allegations are made and investigated, but are not pursued to a formal hearing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The matter of the legal costs of police officers subject to a disciplinary investigation which does not result in charges being brought has been raised in connection with the case of the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester. My right hon. Friend has already announced that he is reviewing all aspects of the case to consider whether there are any lessons to be learnt from it.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide a breakdown by police area of the figures contained in the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 24/86 "Statistics on the operation of certain police powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 First Quarter 1986," tables 1 to 6, September 1986; and if he will also provide a breakdown of the table No. 6 by sex of the persons searched;

(2) if he will state the nature of the harmful article found as indicated in table No. 6 of the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 24/86; where on the person it was found; and whether or not the search was carried out by a police officer;

(3) if he will provide details of the type of class A drug and the quantity found as indicated in table 6 in the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 24/86; and if he will further state with what offence the persons on whom these drugs were found were charged and in which police authority area;

(4) if he will provide details by category of offence of the number of charges laid against persons detained and recorded in table No. 4 in the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 24/86.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Quarterly figures for individual police forces are likely to be subject to considerable variation and so, as stated in note 2 to the Home Office statistical bulletin Issue 24/86, it is intended to publish figures for individual police forces only in an annual bulletin, which it is planned to publish in the spring of 1987. The other requests relate to information which is not collected centrally and which could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Detained Persons

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide details of the reasons used to justify detention beyond 24 hours of persons identified as being detained under section 4 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Section 4 of the the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 controls the setting up of road

checks. It is part IV (sections 34 to 52) of the Act which deals with the conditions and duration of detention. Under section 42 an officer of the rank of superintendent or above may authorise the detention of a person beyond 24 hours if he has reasonable grounds for believing that:

(a) the detention of that person without charge is necessary to secure or preserve evidence for which he is under arrest or to obtain such evidence by questioning him;

(b) an offence for which he is under arrest is a serious arrestable offence; and

(c) the investigation is being conducted diligently and expeditiously.

Police (Staffing)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide information on the number of police officers and civilians based at each of the eight area headquarters, broken down by rank, grade and function.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the current police policy in relation to the use of empty property for the use of surveillance within the Metropolitan police district;

(2) what is the current Metropolitan police policy with regard to the use of council-owned property; and what procedures are adopted in contacting local councils when the need for the use of council property for surveillance arises.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that the police use of vacant premises, including council-owned property, is arranged by application to the person in control of the property, which in the case of council property is an official of the borough council concerned.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide information on the costs of reorganising the Metropolitan police, to include the costs, actual and planned, of rehabilitating and adapting buildings and providing new and additional facilities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Visas

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange for a passport and local inquiry office to be established in Bradford to assist those in Yorkshire affected by the provisions of the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules", Cmnd. 9914; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken to ensure those who are affected by the provisions of the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules", Cmnd. 9914, are aware of what action they are required to take; what publicity material has been issued; in what languages that material has been written; what public information has been placed in the British ethnic press and broadcasting media; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: An information leaflet prepared initially in English, to explain the implications of the new visa requirements, has been made available to inquirers. It has been sent to many immigration, community relations and advice organisations and to the ethnic press.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he has given to airlines about nationals, affected by the provisions of the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules", Cmnd. 9914, settled in the United Kingdom, who do not require visas to return, within two years of departure, to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The details of the new visa requirements given to airlines operating international flights into the United Kingdom included details of visa exemptions for those settled in the United Kingdom who return within two years of their embarkation.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if nationals, subject to the provisions of the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules", Cmnd. 9914, and who wish to comply with immigratiion rules requiring that couples should have met prior to entry clearance interviews, will be able to obtain visas to visit the United Kingdom for the purpose of meeting their fiancés/fiancées;

(2) if nationals, subject to the provisions on the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules", Cmnd. 9914, will be eligible for a visa to visit the United Kingdom for the purpose of attending any appeals in connection with a refusal to grant entry clearance for settlement; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if nationals, subject to the provisions on the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules", Cmnd. 9914, will be able to apply for a visa to visit the United Kingdom for the purpose of obtaining a DNA test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Cmnd. 9914 makes no change to the substantive criteria in paragraphs 17 to 20 of the immigration rules for admission as a visitor, other than to require those coming for a visit to obtain a visa.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what documents students seeking a visa to the United Kingdom, who are covered by the provisions of the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules", Cmnd. 9914, require; what evidence they are required to offer to show ability to meet the cost of their tuition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Those applying for a visa for admission as a student should produce evidence to establish that they meet the requirements of paragraphs 21 to 23 of the "Statement of changes in the Immigration Rules" (HC 169), in particular that they have enrolled for a course of study. A prospective student who has not yet enrolled on a course of study may also be granted a visa to come to this country for a short period to seek a place on such a course.

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions have taken place between his Department and Imperial Chemical Industries about the commercial development of DNA testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: ICI has held preliminary discussions about its plans for commercial developments of DNA testing with officials of the Department.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans have been made for a trial of DNA testing by his Department; how many applicants are included in the trial; from what countries the applicants originate; who will analyse the DNA tests; where that analysis will take place; what criteria have been used to identify those taking part in the trial; and if they will be charged fees;

(2) what information has been given to interested individuals and organisations about the progress of the DNA trial; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans have been made for a pilot study in connection with DNA tests; how many applicants are included in the study; in which countries the applicants live; who will analyse the DNA tests; where that analysis will take place; what criteria have been used to identify the applicants taking part in the pilot study; if the applicants taking part in the pilot study will be charged fees; what information has been given to interested individuals and organisations about the progress of the pilot study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We plan to hold a trial applying DNA testing to a sample of about 40 immigration cases, drawn from various countries, where a parent-child relationship is fundamental to the claim to enter or remain in the United Kingdom. The details have yet to be finalised. Dr. Jeffreys of the University of Leicester has agreed to undertake the analysis. There will be no additional fee other than the normal entry clearance fee payable by entry clearance applicants.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed our proposals with representatives of a number of interested organisations in April. Families invited to participate in the trial will be given full information.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how observations from interested persons or organisations should be submitted for Lord Colville's report on the operation during 1986 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Hurd: Observations, at this stage in writing, should be sent to Lord Colville direct or received on his behalf by the Home Office, F4 division, not later than 28 November 1986.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations have been made by right hon. and hon. Members to Ministers in his Department about *(a)* port refusals and *(b)* other immigration matters in each month since May.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1986]: Since May the number of stops on removal made by right hon. and hon. Members in port refusal cases has been as follows:

	Numbers
May	647
June	710
July	886
August	813
September	979

The available information as to the number of representations made on all immigration matters relates to the number of immigration files[1] created. Since May the numbers, which include cases arising from port refusals, have been as follows:

	Numbers
May	1,202
June	1,728
July	1,279
August	1,255
September	1,745

[1] *Notes:*
1. These figures include a small number of letters dealing with general issues rather than individual cases.
2. Representations made on behalf of a single family may be counted as more than one case where the immigration circumstances of more than one member of the family are under consideration.
3. Further representations made after reply has been sent are included separately in these figures.
4. Representations received about the same case from more than one right hon. Member or hon. Member are counted separately.
5. Not all stops were followed by written representations.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

11. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has given in reply to representations from the Wales Comprehensive Parents' Association about the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The letter from the Wales Comprehensive School Parents' Association was received last May. The Department's reply set out the support which has been given to the GCSE both to provide books and equipment and for the programme of preparation for teachers.

27. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received on the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education syllabus.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received some 150 letter about the introduction of the GCSE since the beginning of September. Ministers have also recently met representatives of the National Association of Head Teachers and my right hon. Friend hopes to meet representatives of the Secondary Heads Association next month.

Research and Development

12. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the level of direct financial support from industry and commerce for research and development in Britain's higher education establishments; how this compares with the European and United States experience; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Universities' income from British industry and commerce for research and development in 1984-85 totalled £47 milion, compared with £23 million in 1981-82. Comparable figures for the public sector of higher education and for other countries are not available. However, in the wider context of gross domestic expenditure on R and D, some 40 per cent. of UK expenditure is financed by industry, compared with about 50 per cent. and 60 per cent. in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany respectively.

Teachers (In-service Training)

13. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations are taking place on his implementation of provisions for in-service training of teachers contained in the Education Bill.

Mrs. Rumbold: A wide range of interests were consulted earlier this year. The local authorities are now submitting their detailed proposals for implementation to my right hon. Friend. A number of bodies, mainly representing providers of training, are making further comments to him.

29. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from teachers' unions about the level of funding for in-service training.

Mrs. Rumbold: No representations have been received from the teacher unions concerning the level of funding announced by my right hon. Friend on 7 August.

Teachers (Pay)

15. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made in reforming the teachers' pay negotiating machinery.

49. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about his plans for the future of the Burnham committee.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I accept that there are strong grounds for changing the present arrangements for settling teachers' pay and conditions of service, but we need to be clear that new arrangements will work better. The proposals made so far in the current talks do not pass that test.

17. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement as to progress on the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service negotiations on teachers' pay.

Mrs. Rumbold: The employers and unions intend to meet in Nottingham for more talks on 8 November. The NAS/UWT has called a series of half-day strikes for the week beginning 3 November. This scandalous act will be condemned by all those concerned about children's education.

Children (Special Educational Needs)

18. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he gives to local education authorities on the speed with which they deal with the assessment of children with special educational needs.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has issued no such guidance to local education authorities.

Non-advanced Further Education

20. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the future funding of non-advanced further education.

26. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the future funding of non-advanced further education.

60. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the future funding of non-advanced further education.

68. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the future funding of non-advanced further education.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend receives representations from local education authority representatives and others from time to time.

National Advisory Board (Planning Exercise)

21. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what impact he expects the Government's funding intentions for advanced further education in the public sector in 1987-88 to have on National Advisory Board planning.

70. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the proposals of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend proposed in August that the resources available for polytechnics and colleges should increase by £54 million, or 8 per cent., in 1987-88. The National Advisory Body has accepted that this is fully adequate to meet student demand and will plan accordingly.

32. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education on the National Advisory Board planning exercise 1987-88.

56. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education on the National Advisory Board planning exercise.

57. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education on the National Advisory Board planning exercise 1987-88.

62. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education on the National Advisory Board planning exercise 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: I refer hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), and for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

Sex Education

22. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he plans to bring into effect the provisions of the Education Bill relating to sex education.

Mrs. Rumbold: Subject to royal assent, the requirement to offer any sex education within a moral context supportive of family life will come into force two months after enactment. Control over the content and organisation of sex education will pass to the governing bodies of county, controlled and maintained special schools when these are reconstituted.

Parental Choice

23. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to extend parental choice within the state school system.

Mr. Dunn: Our 1980 Act substantially increased parents' rights in school admissions and established the assisted places scheme. Our current Bill to increase parental influence over their children's schooling is a powerful extension of that choice. Additionally, my right hon. Friend has announced plans to establish a network of city technology colleges, to offer a further choice of school to the parents and children of our cities.

School Equipment

24. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the provision of equipment in schools.

28. **Mr. Robert C. Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the provision of equipment in schools.

36. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the provision of equipment in schools.

55. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the provision of equipment in schools.

69. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the provision of equipment in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received no representations arising from Her Majesty's Inspectorate's judgment on the provision of equipment in schools in its report on "The Effects of Local Authority Expenditure Policies on Education Provision in England — 1985". Provision for equipment, as for all other aspects of the education, is discussed annually with representatives of the local authorities.

University Grants Committee

25. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers about the future funding of the University Grants Committee.

44. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers about the future funding of the University Grants Committee.

48. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers about the future funding of the University Grants Committee.

66. **Mr. Blair** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers about the future funding of the University Grants Committee.

Mr. Walden: I refer hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) earlier today.

School Buildings

30. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department now proposes to make available additional resources for the repair and maintenance of school buildings.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's proposals for local authority expenditure in 1987-88 imply an increase of over 14 per cent. in planned expenditure on education, compared with this year's plans. It is for local education authorities to deploy their resources, but the Government believe that they should give high priority to the better repair and maintenance of school buildings. The plans allow for a substantial increase in expenditure for this purpose, provided that authorities contain their other costs.

35. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the standard of maintenance of school buildings.

43. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the standard of maintenance of school buildings.

53. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the standard of maintenance of school buildings.

58. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate with regard to the standard of maintenance of school buildings.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

Secondary Education (West Essex)

31. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received about the proposed reorganisation of secondary education in west Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Objections have been received in respect of statutory proposals published by Essex local education authority on 16 May to reorganise secondary and further education in the west Essex area. Comments on the objections are awaited from the authority.

Mathematics Teachers

33. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further proposals he has to increase the number of teachers of mathematics in schools.

40. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further proposals he has to increase the number of teachers of mathematics in schools.

64. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further proposals he has to increase the number of teachers of mathematics in schools.

65. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further proposals he has to increase the number of teachers of mathematics in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave on Friday 24 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall).

Education Standards

34. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further action he is taking to improve education standards.

Mrs. Rumbold: All the Government's education policies are in pursuance of my right hon. Friend's main aim, which is to improve standards throughout the education service and increase the value obtained from the substantial resources allocated to it.

Details of many of the Government's initiatives to improve standards, and the practical measures taken and planned to give them effect, were set out in the White Papers "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) and "Working Together—Education and Training" (Cmnd. 9823).

First Degree Students

37. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the number of first degree students enrolling in the current academic year at universities.

54. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the number of first degree students enrolling in the current academic year at universities.

59. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the number of first degree students enrolling in the current academic year at universities.

63. **Mr. Straw** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the number of first degree students enrolling in the current academic year at universities.

Mr. Walden: Figures for 1986-87 are not yet available. Early indications suggest that there will be a small increase of around 1 per cent. in the total numbers of home full-time and sandwich first degree students in universities in Great Britain compared with the previous year.

Mature Students

38. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the level of grant provision for mature students.

Mr. Walden: My right hon Friend receives representations about many aspects of the student support arrangements. It is not possible to distinguish those which relate mainly or exclusively to the level of grant provision for mature students.

School Books

39. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the level of expenditure on school text books by local education authorities in England and Wales.

50. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the level of expenditure on school text books by local education authorities in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1984-85, the latest available year for which firm figures are available, local education authorities in England spent a total of £63 million on books in primary and secondary schools. Expenditure in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

School Sports Facilities

41. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made in encouraging more dual use of school sports facilities, as recommended in paragraph 56 of the second report from the Environment Committee, Session 1985-86.

Mr. Dunn: Proposals in the Education Bill aim to encourage the greater dual use of school facilities. Additionally a research project has been initiated to look into charging policies and to provide practical guidance.

School Services

45. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase incentives to schools to improve their services to pupils.

Mr. Dunn: The Education Bill contains various measures to increase schools' responsiveness to the communities they serve. In particular, governing bodies will be more broadly based and have effective powers, including an appropriate measure of financial responsibility.

Primary Schools

46. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will bring forward proposals to support educational projects similar to the Cranborne Chase project for rural primary schools throughout England.

Mr. Dunn: Fourteen LEAs in England are currently in receipt of educational support grant for pilot projects to improve the quality or range of the curriculum in primary schools in rural areas. The Cranborne Chase project is one of two being supported in Dorset. Regular evaluation is a feature of all the projects, the objective being to assist LEAs to experiment in ways capable of replication in other rural areas of the country.

Free Speech

47. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest discussions he has had concerning the maintenance of free speech in universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Walden: Pursuant to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend on 1 July, at column 474, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote on 7 August inviting the bodies concerned to seek a further meeting with officials to discuss freedom of speech before the resumption on 21 October of the Report stage of the Education Bill. A response to that invitation was received only on 17 October and a meeting with officials took place yesterday. In addition, on 16 October my hon. Friend the Minister of State discussed with representatives of the Catholic Education Council and the Church of England Board of Education the bearing of the proposed legislation on the voluntary colleges.

University Funding

51. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the funding of universities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Walden: The funding of the universities in 1987-88 and later years is currently under review, as promised in the statement by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) on 20 May.

School Governors

52. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to seek to alter the powers given to school governors.

Mr. Dunn: One of the main purposes of the Education Bill is to guarantee reconstituted governing bodies significant powers in running individual schools.

Secondary School Pupils (Expenditure)

61. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in secondary schools in England in real terms in 1978 and in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what are the comparable figures for secondary schools in Staffordshire.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities in England spent an average of £945 per secondary pupil in 1978-79

and £1,085 in 1984-85. The comparable figures for Staffordshire are £945 and £1,025. The cash figures for 1978-79 have been repriced to 1984-85 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

Erith School

71. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to visit Erith school.

Mr. Dunn: No.

Teachers (Shortage)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the shortage of teachers of mathematics, sciences and craft, design and technology in schools.

42. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the shortage of teachers of mathematics, sciences and craft, design and technology in schools.

67. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the shortage of teachers of mathematics, sciences and craft, design and technology in schools.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the shortage of teachers of mathematics, sciences and craft, design and technology in schools.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

Design Courses

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of full-time students in higher education currently on design-related courses compared with the number five years ago.

Mr. Walden: In 1984 there were 27,000 full-time and sandwich students in higher education in Great Britain on art and design courses compared with 18,000 in 1979. 1985 university figures are not yet available. In English public sector higher education the number was 23,000 compared to 22,000 in 1984.

Council for Educational Technology

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the current membership of the Council for Educational Technology, indicating in each case the basis on which the member was appointed.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science

Mr. D. H. Grattan *(Chairman)*
Mr. B. McGettrick, Principal, St. Andrew's College of Education, Glasgow
Mr. D. T. Rees, Dean of Faculty of Science and Technology, Gwent College of Higher Education
Mr. J. F. Foster, Director, Microelectronics Education Support Unit
Professor W. Gosling, Technical Director, The Plessey Company Ltd.
Mr. P. D. Gratton, County Librarian, Derbyshire County Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

Mr. R. P. Watson, Managing Director, Schools Book Division, The Longman Group Ltd.

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Secretary of State for Employment

Mr. A. Aspinall, Engineering Industry Training Board
Mr. G. M. Law, General Manager, Woolwich Equitable Building Society

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the AMMA

Mrs. L. Hamilton, Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Association of University Teachers (AUT)

Professor A. Bolton, Department of Civil engineering, Heriot-Watt University

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Association of Principals of Colleges (APC)

Mr. G. R. Estell, Vice-Principal, Harrogate College of Arts and Technology

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics (CDP)

Mr. D. J. Mortimer, The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom (CVCP)

Dr. A. O. Betts, Principal and Dean of the Royal Veterinary College

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Headmasters' Conference

Mr. D. A. Fenner, Headmaster, Alleyn's School

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the National Association of Headteachers

Mr. A. Pendlebury-Green, Headmaster, St. Mary's CE Primary School

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultations with the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE)

Ms. J. Tait, Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the National Union of Teachers

Mr. D. I. Morgan, Vice-Principal, WR Tuson College

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Secondary Heads Association

Mr. P. J. Hobson, Headmaster, London Nautical School

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers

Mr. D. L. Davies, Hereford and Worcester Education Department

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Association of County Councils (ACC)

Mr. M. J. Henley, CEO, Northamptonshire County Council

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA)
Mr. R. J. Hartles, CEO, London Borough of Ealing

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)
Mr. G. E. Humphreys, Director of Education, Gwynedd

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the BBC
Miss S. Innes, BBC

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the British Educational Equipment Association
Mr. N. Whalley

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the EFVA
Rear-Admiral Bell, Educational Foundation for Visual Aids

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the IBA
Dr. J. R. Moss, Independent Broadcasting Authority

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the NIACE
Mr. A. Stock, National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the Open University
Professor D. G. Hawkridge, Open University

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science after consultation with the SCET
Mr. R. B. Macluskie, Scottish Council for Educational Technology

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland
Mr. J. G. Graham, Senior Deputy, Director of Education, Grampian Region
Mr. T. K. Robinson, Director Scottish Curriculum Development Service

Appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Mr. G. M. Wilkinson, Ulster Polytechnic

Youth Service (Report)

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the report on the youth service, compiled after receiving responses from local education authorities, will be released; and whether copies will be available in the Library.

Mr. Dunn: An analysis of the responses to circular 1/85 received from local education authorities is nearing completion and will be made freely available to hon. Members and others in due course.

Mid-day Supervision

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy that mid-day supervision of school children be part of the detailed contractual negotiations between representatives of the teachers' unions and the employers.

Mr. Dunn The Government accepted last year that mid-day supervision should not be a duty of teachers under their contracts of employment as teachers. We have made education support grant available to assist local education authorities to recruit mid-day supervisors: these may be teachers employed under separate contracts, or non-teaching staff.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local authorities that have a pupil-teacher ratio of 15·4:1 or better in their secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The following local education authorities in England had pupil-teacher ratios of 15·4:1 or less in their maintained secondary schools in January 1986:

	Ratio
Barnet	14·5
Brent	12·0
Croydon	15·2
Ealing	14·6
Enfield	15·3
Haringey	12·6
Harrow	14·6
Havering	15·3
Hounslow	15·2
Kingston	14·9
Newham	13·5
Waltham Forest	13·7
ILEA	12·8
Coventry	15·2
Dudley	14·9
Sandwell	14·8
Walsall	14·6
Wolverhampton	14·7
Knowsley	14·5
Liverpool	14·9
St. Helens	15·1
Bury	15·2
Manchester	13·8
Rochdale	14·6
Salford	15·0
Wigan	15·0
Sheffield	15·1
Gateshead	15·2
Newcastle upon Tyne	14·5
North Tyneside	13·8
South Tyneside	14·4
Isles of Scilly	9·7
Nottinghamshire	15·4

Students (Payments)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether new students receiving grants for the first time in the current year have suffered longer delays in receiving their cheques; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I am not aware that, in general, grant payments to new students in the current academic year have been made any later than is usual. Inevitably there are occasionally circumstances which lead to delays in particular cases.

Nursery Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East of 22 October, whether he will list the number of pupils aged under five years receiving education in January 1979 in *(a)* nursery classes of maintained primary schools, *(b)* nursery schools and

(c) all under fives in maintained schools, together with the proportion these represent of the three and four-year-old population.

Mr. Dunn: The number of pupils aged under five receiving education in January 1979 in *(a)* nursery classes of maintained primary schools *(b)* nursery schools and *(c)* all under-fives in maintained schools, together with the proportion these represent of the three and four-year-old population are given in the table.

Pupils under five receiving education in maintained schools in England—January 1979

Local education authority	*Nursery classes*		*Nursery schools*		*All schools including nursery classes*	
	Pupils	*As a percentage of population*	*Pupils*	*As a percentage of population*	*Pupils*	*As a percentage of population*
Barking	842	22·2	0	0·0	1,954	51·6
Barnet	1,191	18·4	426	6·6	3,443	53·3
Bexley	271	5·2	175	3·4	938	18·1
Brent	1,365	22·4	282	4·6	3,309	54·3
Bromley	97	1·5	0	0·0	1,068	16·5
Croydon	165	2·1	316	4·0	2,371	30·0
Ealing	1,003	15·8	438	6·9	3,506	55·2
Enfield	1,136	18·7	0	0·0	2,785	45·7
Haringey	1,460	26·8	247	4·5	3,196	58·7
Harrow	565	12·4	92	2·0	1,418	31·1
Havering	233	4·0	0	0·0	2,113	36·3
Hillingdon	1,675	31·1	80	1·5	3,079	57·1
Hounslow	1 415	29·8	0	0·0	2,931	61·7
Kingston upon Thames	693	23·8	233	8·0	1,633	56·1
Merton	875	23·5	399	10·7	2,065	55·4
Newham	1,550	25·8	1,074	17·9	3,310	55·1
Redbridge	433	8·5	0	0·0	1,125	22·1
Richmond upon Thames	218	7·0	50	1·6	1,177	38·0
Sutton	323	8·4	220	5·7	564	14·7
Waltham Forest	1,368	23·8	433	7·5	2,983	51·8
Inner London	14,363	28·3	3,876	7·6	25,221	49·6
Birmingham	4,165	16·0	2,122	8·1	12,913	49·6
Coventry	1,329	14·8	274	3·0	4,337	48·2
Dudley	1,078	13·9	562	7·2	2,269	29·2
Sandwell	1,924	23·8	223	2·8	4,747	58·7
Solihull	1,001	18·6	0	0·0	2,730	50·8
Walsall	2,087	30·1	893	12·9	5,242	75·7
Wolverhampton	1,821	25·5	842	11·8	3,770	52·9
Knowsley	837	15·3	0	0·0	1,796	32·8
Liverpool	3,881	32·4	591	4·9	8,175	68·3
St. Helens	838	15·5	63	1·2	2,713	50·1
Sefton	1,432	19·7	291	4·0	4,019	55·3
Wirral	1,109	13·2	251	3·0	3,716	44·3
Bolton	1,375	19·8	566	8·2	4,223	60·8
Bury	393	8·0	138	2·8	2,060	42·0
Manchester	5,217	47·3	383	3·5	7,539	68·3
Oldham	949	15·9	182	3·0	3,105	51·9
Rochdale	697	11·5	812	13·3	3,401	55·9
Salford	1,338	21·8	582	9·5	3,831	62·4
Stockport	159	2·2	667	9·1	3,248	44·1
Tameside	1,077	19·3	307	5·5	3,053	54·8
Trafford	464	8·5	76	1·4	787	14·5
Wigan	1,161	12·9	247	2·7	4,344	48·2
Barnsley	1,972	34·8	320	5·6	3,321	58·5
Doncaster	2,608	34·9	0	0·0	5,174	69·2
Rotherham	2,080	30·4	362	5·3	3,720	54·4
Sheffield	2,828	23·1	658	5·4	6,045	49·4
Bradford	2,716	21·1	670	5·2	6,110	47·5
Calderdale	996	20·8	73	1·5	2,727	56·8
Kirklees	1,626	16·2	883	8·8	4,336	43·1
Leeds	2,805	15·6	284	1·6	7,305	40·5
Wakefield	2,511	30·8	503	6·2	4,860	59·6
Gateshead	920	17·1	121	2·3	2,756	51·3
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,455	22·6	533	8·3	3,965	61·6
North Tyneside	1,376	31·2	239	5·4	3,260	74·0
South Tyneside	566	14·8	817	21·4	2,567	67·3
Sunderland	1,402	17·3	786	9·7	4,740	58·4
Isles of Scilly	0	0·0	0	0·0	11	0·0
Avon	997	4·6	1,425	6·5	3,411	15·6
Bedfordshire	2,492	17·6	1,192	8·4	4,698	33·2
Berkshire	1,953	10·9	1,661	9·3	4,539	25·4
Buckinghamshire	1,351	9·3	498	3·4	2,943	20·2
Cambridgeshire	994	6·4	735	4·7	6,031	38·6
Cheshire	3,486	14·4	655	2·7	8,370	34·5
Cleveland	5,554	35·1	659	4·2	9,319	58·9

Local education authority	Nursery classes		Nursery schools		All schools including nursery classes	
	Pupils	As a percentage of population	Pupils	As a percentage of population	Pupils	As a percentage of population
Cornwall	997	10·0	98	1·0	4,053	40·6
Cumbria	1,195	10·7	658	5·9	5,375	47·9
Derbyshire	3,118	13·7	975	4·3	8,040	35·4
Devon	1,112	5·2	91	0·4	4,373	20·3
Dorset	587	4·8	0	0·0	1,591	13·0
Durham	2,310	15·4	2,034	13·6	8,889	59·2
East Sussex	557	4·5	245	2·0	4,238	34·3
Essex	1,425	3·8	247	0·7	6,115	16·1
Gloucestershire	0	0·0	0	0·0	2,598	21·1
Hampshire	1,824	3·6	240	0·6	7,680	20·8
Hereford and Worcester	651	4·2	40	0·3	905	5·8
Hertfordshire	5,659	24·0	1,734	7·3	11,215	47·5
Humberside	3,938	17·6	926	4·1	8,858	39·6
Isle of Wight	121	5·0	0	0·0	993	41·2
Kent	1,306	3·6	84	0·2	4,634	12·6
Lancashire	1,296	3·8	3,010	8·8	14,866	43·4
Leicestershire	4,662	21·4	48	0·2	5,621	25·9
Lincolnshire	558	4·2	319	2·4	3,011	22·8
Norfolk	416	2·4	340	2·0	4,875	28·7
North Yorkshire	2,032	13·7	282	1·9	4,843	32·7
Northamptonshire	667	4·4	547	3·6	4,588	30·3
Northumberland	720	9·8	140	1·9	3,242	44·2
Nottinghamshire	8,764	35·7	465	1·9	11,829	48·2
Oxfordshire	783	5·8	780	5·7	1,985	14·6
Salop	647	7·2	220	2·4	2,126	23·6
Somerset	83	0·8	77	0·8	2,425	24·7
Staffordshire	3,840	14·6	1,839	7·0	9,888	37·5
Suffolk	1,323	8·6	122	0·8	3,919	25·5
Surey	2,109	9·3	483	2·1	4,578	20·2
Warwickshire	1,149	9·0	578	4·5	4,783	37·4
West Sussex	67	0·5	368	2·7	1,412	10·3
Wiltshire	94	0·7	0	0·0	2,677	19·0
England	161,771	14·1	48,477	4·2	428,640	37·4

Population used is the estimated population of three and four-year-olds in each LEA.

TRANSPORT

Roads (Inquiries)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to modify the public inquiry procedure for major roads and motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: For the majority of road proposals the public inquiry system works well. Most inquiries last less than 14 days. A few are lengthy and this is a matter for concern. Procedures are kept under review. Suggestions for change are given careful consideration. The scope for change is limited by the Government's concern to safeguard the rights of objectors.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on changes to the timings on pedestrian crossings which are heavily used by either elderly people or children.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Transport, to his similar question on October 24 1985 at column *187*. It is expected that the revised Pelican Pedestrian Crossing Regulations and General Directions 1969 (as amended) will be laid at the end of the year.

Driving Licences

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many applicants for *(a)* car and *(b)* lorry goods driving licences there have been in each of the last five years; and what percentage of these applicants did not pass the test.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information required is not readily available from a common source and in precisely the format required. Figures which can be provided are as follows:

(a) In each of the past five calendar years DVLC has received applications for driving licences as below:

	Applications (millions)	First application[1]
1981	6·2	1·4
1982	6·6	1·5
1983	6·3	1·2
1984	5·7	1·4
1985	5·6	1·3

[1] those who have not yet passed a driving test, included in the total.

Details of applications received for driving tests and the failure rates are:

	Applications received (not applicants)	Percentage failure rate
1981	1,837·254	52
1982	1,891·615	52

	Applications received (not applicants)	Percentage failure rate
1983	1,916,951	51
1984	1,955,659	51
1985	1,935,244	51

(b) Details for HGV (lorry) applications are not available for calendar years. But the following information is available HGV licence applications

		Provisional HGV licences issued included in the total
1 October 1980 to 30 September 1981	361,400	55,200
1 October 1981 to 30 September 1982	351,700	53,500
1 October 1982 to 30 September 1983	376,700	52,700
1 October 1983 to 31 March 1984	177,700	28,700
1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985	351,100	57,000
1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986	365,700	60,600

Applications for HGV driving tests in the following five calendar years are

Applications received

Year		Per cent. Failed
1981	33,345	44
1982	34,032	45
1983	33,977	45
1984	38,038	45
1985	42,638	46

Driving Test

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that the current driving test is adequate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am satisfied that the current driving test is soundly based and provides an adequate assessment of a candidate's basic driving skills.

M11 (Extension)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made with the extension of the M11 southwards into London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans to extend the M11. Following public inquiries, orders have been made fixing the line of the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link road. This will provide a new all-purpose dual carriageway relieving traffic-congested shopping and residential streets through Stratford, Leyton, Leytonstone and Wanstead. The necessary consultation and statutory procedures in respect of the intermediate interchanges and land acquisition are now being undertaken.

Disabled People (Public Transport)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department has given to the document "All Change: A Consumer Study of Public Transport Handicap in Greater London", published by the Greater London Association for Disabled People, a copy of which has been sent to him; if there is any action he will be taking on its recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We were interested to receive the GLAD report. We shall be giving careful consideration to the recommendations contained in it and I shall be meeting representatives of GLAD shortly to discuss them. The Department of Transport has a long-standing commitment to ensuring that the transport needs of people with disabilities are given a high priority.

Stansted Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the chairman of the North of England Regional Consortium about subsidy to Stansted Airport; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have received a letter from the chairman to which I have replied. I have made it clear that I consider the provisions of the Airports Act 1986 fully adequate to ensure the prevention of unfair cross-subsidy leading to pricing policies which harm, or are intended to harm, another airport's business.

M25 (Construction Time)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the total time the M25 motorway has been under construction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Fourteen years. Work started in March 1972 on the section between Reigate and Godstone. The first section open to traffic was between junctions 23 and 24 (A1-A111), in September 1975. The final section, between junctions 21A and 23 (A405-A1), is to open on 29 October.

M25 (Service Areas)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway service areas will be operational on the M25 motorway when it is completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. The motorway service area at South Mimms will provide fuel from mid-November, and is expected to be fully open in the spring. Tenders have been obtained for a site at Thurrock and I aim to announce a decision on this shortly. The proposal for a site at Clacket Lane near Westerham is currently being considered at a public inquiry. We are still examining the possibility of a site at Iver on the west side of the M25.

M25 (Repair and Maintenance)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects all carriageways of the M25 motorway to be completely open to traffic and unimpeded by repair or maintenance work.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The final section of the M25 is to be opened to traffic on 29 October. It is not possible to predict the timing of all maintenance work on the 117 miles of motorway, the earliest section of which is over 10 years old. Works to relieve congestion on certain sections and to improve safety are under way or planned, in addition to necessary maintenance work, including routine and emergency maintenance. I drove around on Monday 27 October without hindrance.

Lorry Ban (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consultation took place between his Department and the London residuary body prior to the announcement to relax the former Greater London council's lorry ban.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. The way in which the London residuary body is administering the London borough's lorry ban as its agent is not a matter for me so the question of consultation did not arise.

Aircraft (Engines)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the use of marginally unserviceable engines with regard to extended twin-engined aircraft operations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority is statutorily responsible for aviation safety. It has informed me that the use of marginally unserviceable engines is not permitted for any purpose, least of all for extended range twin-engined operation.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Entry Certificates

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the towns in Ghana and Nigeria where personal applications can be made for entry certificates.

Mr. Eggar: Accra in Ghana and Lagos and Kaduna in Nigeria.

Visas

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any consideration is being given, following the Government's decision to extend visa requirements for some visitors to Britain, to establish any additional British posts in the countries affected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. But entry clearances are now being issued in Madras. Three entry clearance officers have been posted there.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements are being made by British overseas posts in countries whose nationals are subject to the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules," Cmnd. 9914, to ensure that interviews in connection with visa applications are recorded, that the explanatory statements are prepared within fixed time limits and that entry clearance officers' handwritten notes are also made available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Entry clearance officers are under instruction to take notes of all interviews and to despatch explanatory statements as soon as practicable after receipt of an appeal. The independent appellate authorities will shortly be considering the value of experimental cases in which the vital exchanges of an entry clearance officer's record of interview are incorporated verbatim into the explanatory statement.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken by British posts in countries whose nationals are subject to the provisions of the "Statement of change in Immigration Rules," Cmnd. 9914, to distribute widely information about the requirements of visa applications written in local languages; what consideration has been given to extending independent advice facilities overseas; of the sort provided by the United Kingdom Immigration Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A Home Office leaflet explaining how the recent statement of change in immigration rules affect nationals of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka is being sent to all entry clearance issuing posts for reprinting in the local language as necessary. Any extension of independent advice facilities overseas is a matter for the agencies concerned.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement explaining more fully the criteria to be observed by British entry clearance officers overseas in deciding whether visa applications by those wishing to visit the United Kingdom fall within the categories of compassionate, medical or other particularly compelling circumstances; and if he will identify what documentation entry clearance officers will require to make such judgments.

Mr. Eggar: Applications for visit visas in the subcontinent are at present normally dealt with on the day they are received. Because circumstances vary from case to case no detailed criteria are laid down, nor is essential documentation defined, in connection with cases requiring a higher degree of urgency.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the minimum and maximum cost of appointing extra entry clearance officers in Dhaka, Accra, Islamabad and Karachi.

Mr. Eggar: The estimated average costs (that is, allowing for marital status and other factors) based on 1986-87 prices are:

	£
Dhaka	76,600
Accra	106,300
Islamabad	89,000
Karachi	104,400

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs during what hours each day British posts in Dhaka, Islamabad, Karachi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, New Delhi and Accra are open to receive personal calls related to visa applications; on which days during each year each post is shut; what arrangements are being made for staffing of entry clearance offices to ensure the taking of holiday leave does not increase the time taken to consider visa applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

Post	*Hours open to public*
Dhaka	0730 to 1400
Islamabad	0800 to 1230
Karachi	0800 to 1230

Post	Hours open to public
Bombay	0800 to 1130
Calcutta	0900 to 1230
Madras	0900 to 1230
New Delhi	0900 to 1230
Accra	0745 to 1145

Posts are instructed as far as possible to ensure that officers take leave outside the seasonal peak period for which, at all posts, additional summer relief staff are provided to cope with increased demand.

I shall write to the hon. Member about the public holidays taken by each post.

Expo 86

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who was responsible for the design and layout of the British pavilion at Expo 86 in Vancouver.

Mr. Eggar: The Central Office of Information was commissioned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to undertake the design and layout of the British pavilion. It consulted many other organisations, including private sector design companies, the Department of Transport, the British Overseas Trade Board, and British Rail.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the British Government spent on the British pavilion at Expo 86 in Vancouver.

Mr. Eggar: We contributed £1·5 million, from Foreign and Commonwealth Office overseas information funds, to the cost of the pavilion. Expos of this type are intended primarily for the education of the public, in this case on the theme of transportation and communications.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what other British organisations contributed towards the cost of the British pavilion at Expo 86 in Vancouver; and how much in each case.

Mr. Eggar: In addition to the £1·5 million from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 96 British companies provided exhibits, and financed the construction of a VIP lounge within the pavilion, at an estimated total cost of £3 million. Ten regional tourist organisations in Britain provided staff to assist at the information desk. Details of the cost of these contributions are not readily available.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the British pavilion at Expo 86 in Vancouver.

Mr. Eggar: One parliamentary question and nine letters from the public, three of which were forwarded by hon. Members, have been received about the British pavilion at Expo 86.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many European Economic Community regulations, directives and other decisions of the Council of Ministers were brought before the House, in total and by type, during 1985;

(2) in respect of what percentage of those European Economic Community regulations, directives and other decisions of the Council of Ministers brought before the House in 1985 for debate with a recommendation for a decision, the Council's decision had already been published in the European Economic Community's *Official Journal* before the House debated them.

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has asked me to reply on his behalf.

A total of 430 European Community documents incorporating proposals by the Commission were deposited in Parliament in 1985. Of these 283 (66 per cent.) were proposals for council regulations, 63 (15 per cent.) proposals for Council directives, and 84 (19 per cent.) proposals for council decisions. In the same year, following recommendations from the Commons Select Committee on European Legislation, 43 documents — some of which would have been deposited before 1985 — were debated either on the Floor of the House or in Standing Committee, of which 25 (58 per cent.) concerned regulations, 16 (37 per cent.) directives, and 2 (5 per cent.) were decisions. 3 proposals (7 per cent. of those debated) were formally adopted by the Council of Ministers before the House had debated them. Two of these had been agreed by the Committee as being suitable for adoption before debate by the House; as for the third, the Chairman of the Commons Select Committee on European Legislation was informed of the position in accordance with the procedure laid down in the House of Commons resolution of 30 October 1980.

ENVIRONMENT

Thamesmead

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the transfer of assets in Thamesmead from the London Residuary Body to Thamesmead Town Limited.

Mr. Chope: Since January there have been eight direct written representations, all from hon. Members. If my hon. Friend would let me know which aspects interest him, I should be glad to write to him.

Green Belt (Developments)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department intends to issue any planning guidelines for out of town shopping centre developments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our existing policy on planning and large new retail developments was set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) in an answer he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) on 5 July 1985, in which he said inter alia:—

"Since commercial competition as such is not a land-use planning consideration, the possible effects of a proposed major retail development on existing retailers is not in this sense a relevant factor in deciding planning applications and appeals. It will be necessary, however, to take account in exceptional circumstances of the cumulative effects of other recent and proposed large scale retail developments in the locality, and to consider whether they are on such a scale and of a kind that they could seriously affect the vitality and viability of a nearby town centre as a whole—for example, whether they seem likely to result in a significant increase in vacant properties, or a marked reduction in the range of

services the town centre provides, such as could lead to its general physical deterioration and to the detriment of its future place in the economic and social life of the community. Town centres need to maintain their diversity and activity if they are to retain their vitality, but the range and variety of shops and services will change, as they have always done, in response to changing conditions." — [*Official Report*, 5 July 1985; c. 277.]

We also propose to make a direction requiring local planning authorities to consult the Department before granting permission for retail developments of 250,000 sq ft or more, to enable my right hon. Friend to consider whether the application should be referred to him for decision under section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Dogs

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to permit local authorities to introduce local licensing and warden systems for dogs.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. As my right hon. Friend announced on 23 July — [column 266] — the Government have decided to abolish the dog licence when a suitable legislative opportunity arises.

Public Record Office (Air Conditioning)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the air conditioning system of the Public Record Office at Kew, and the work so far undertaken by the Property Services Agency; what has been the total cost to public funds of rectification of the difficulties over the last five years; and what attempt is being made to identify the persons or firms responsible and recover the expenditure from them.

Mr. Chope: An independent review of the building, its plant and services, was commissioned by the PSA in 1984. This has revealed no major faults in the building or its services. A number of improvements were recommended to enhance the working environment overall and better to safeguard the stored records, including a new computer control and monitoring system, new lighting, new steam humidifiers, and overhaul of the air distribution system and new duct work on the repository floor. Work on these improvements is now virtually complete at a cost of £750,000. Of this, £205,000 is directly attributable to the air conditioning system. Over the past five years a total of £1,186,000 has been spent on air conditioning, including £800,000 on routine and regular maintenance.

The independent review has confirmed that the original designs of the air conditioning system were fully in accordance with the standards which applied at the time. In the light of that review there is no case for claiming recovery of the subsequent costs incurred.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the Devon county council solicitor's letter of 17 September regarding housing powers of county councils as it applies to the Torbay ring road and properties at Churscombe green at Marldon.

Mr. Tracey: The Department is replying to this letter today.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of transferring personnel from the present Property Services agency area works in York, including travelling expenses.

Mr. Chope: The latest management estimate of transfer costs arising from the move of staff from York to Leeds is £363,000 over three years.

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the square footage currently used by the Property Services Agency area works office in York.

Mr. Chope: The area of accommodation occupied by Area Office York staff is 12,820 sq ft.

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what alternative office accommodation is being considered for the staff currently employed at the Property Services Agency area works office in York; and at what cost per square foot by comparison with existing accommodation.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money has been available to the Leicester city council for the provision and for the improvement, respectively, of public sector housing in each of the last 10 years for which records are available.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1986]: Local authorities are free to determine how to spend the resources available to them for capital expenditure. My Department does not have information about the total resources available to individual authorities over the past 10 years, which since 1981-82 have included use of the prescribed proportion of capital receipts. The housing investment programme allocations to Leicester city council, which represent permission for the council to borrow money to finance capital expenditure, have been as follows:

	£ million
1977-78	19·923
1978-79	22·681
1979-80	20·524
1980-81	17·379
1981-82	17·036
1982-83	18·496
1983-84	17·373
1984-85	18·900
1985-86	15·000
1986-87	13·200

The council's total capital expenditure on housing has been considerably larger, and in 1985-86 was over £28 million.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing subsidy paid to each London borough, metropolitan district and non-metropolitan district in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1986-87, expressed in constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1986]: I am placing in the Library the information requested for the years 1981-82 to 1986-87 inclusive. Information for the years prior to 1981-82, when the present housing subsidy system came into operation, cannot be provided except at undue cost.

Hospitals (Infection Prevention)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the working group on the prevention of infection in hospitals was set up; who were the members of it; what were its terms of reference; what was its method of operation; when its report was completed; if it is to be published; what action is being taken on its recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Hospital Infection Working Group was convened in September 1985.

The chairman of the working group is Professor E. M. Cooke of the Central Public Health Laboratory Service, Director of Hospital Infection.

Other members of the working group are:

Professor G. Ayliffe — Director of the Hospital Infection Research Laboratory, Birmingham
Dr. J. A. Child — Consultant Clinical Haematologist and Physician at Leeds General Infirmary
Dr. R. T. Mayon-White — Consultant Epidemiologist, John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford
Mr. M. Ruane — District General Manager, Central Manchester Health Authority
Ms. L. J. Taylor — Clinical Nurse, Central Public Health Laboratory, Director of Hospital Infection
Mrs. M. A. Worsley — Senior Nurse on Central of North Manchester Health Authority
Dr. A. P. Gillett — Stoke Mandeville Hospital
Dr. C. L. R. Bartlett — of Public Health Laboratory Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre

DHSS officers also participated and provided the secretariat.

The terms of reference were:

"To provide expert support to the DHSS in its central coordinating role in the field of infection control in hospitals; to revise the guidance on the management of infection control in hospitals including monitoring; to highlight any gaps in guidance on infection control in hospitals relating to specific areas; and to highlight current guidance or practice that is not cost effective".

As their first task the group were asked to prepare draft guidance on management arrangements for hospital infection control. In undertaking this task they have taken account of relevant recommendations in the report of the Stanley Royd hospital inquiry. The group's method of operation was by discussion of papers prepared by individual members, who collectively have considerable expertise and experience of all aspects of this subject. The final version of the group's recommended guidance on management arrangements for hospital infection control is imminent. We shall consider urgently the best way of promulgating this advice.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hypnotherapy

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received about the provision of hypnotherapy by the National Health Service; and what response he has given;

(2) what organisations regulating the use of hypnotherapy are recognised by his Department; and what is his estimate of the number of recognised hypnotherapists in England and Wales.

Mrs. Currie: We have received a representation proposing legislation to restrict the title of "hypnotherapist", and the practice of hypnotherapy, to members of certain professions, but this was not concerned with the National Health Service but with people who offer hypnotherapy privately.

I am aware that within the National Health Service a number of doctors, dentists and psychologists make use of hypnosis for different purposes, but they are employed as doctors, dentists and psychologists, and are regulated by their relative professional bodies.

The Department is aware of the existence of several organisations which offer training leading to some form of qualification in hypnotherapy. Hypnotherapy, however, is not a registered profession and there is no officially recognised qualification.

There are no centrally collected figures, either of those using hypnotic techniques within the Health Service, or of those using them more generally.

Elderly People

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list for each social services authority area the number of people over 75 years of age in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985, or whenever the latest figures are available; and what percentage change this represents;

(2) if he will list for each social services authority area the number of people in residential care for the elderly in *(a)* local authority homes, *(b)* private homes and *(c)* voluntary homes; and what percentage change this represents from the numbers in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1984.

Mrs. Currie: Copies of the latest available data have been placed in the Library.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of people in residential care for the elderly in *(a)* local authority homes, *(b)* private homes and *(c)* voluntary homes; and what percentage change this represents in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1984.

Mrs. Currie: The available data are given in the table.

Local authority and registered residential care homes for the elderly and disabled

Type of home	*England* *Numbers of residents aged 65 and over*[1]			*Percentage change*[2]	
	1979	*1984*	*1985*	*1979 to 1985*	*1984 to 1985*
Total	152,897	180,676	193,487	+26	+7
Local Authority	102,086	101,896	101,526	−1	
Voluntary	24,716	26,005	25,818	+4	−1
Private	26,095	52,675	66,143	+153	+26

[1] as at 31 March
[2] to nearest whole number

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of places provided for the elderly in both public sector and privately-owned establishments in each of the last seven years.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 October 1986]: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to residential establishments rather than hospitals or nursing establishments. The available data are given in the table.

Local authority and registered residential care homes for the elderly and disabled.

Numbers of places

As at 31 March	*Total*	*England* *Local Authority*	*Voluntary*	*Private*
1979	179,502	113,592	33,912	31,998
1980	184,824	114,103	34,957	35,764
1981	191,055	114,921	36,881	39,253
1982	196,582	115,493	36,743	44,346
1983	205,286	115,913	37,613	51,760
1984	217,744	116,430	38,242	63,072
1985	233,587	116,080	37,466	80,041

Health Authorities (Property)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what requirements are made of, or advice given to, regional and district health authorities when they are deciding on the disposal of property surplus to their health requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The National Health Service Handbook on Land Transactions, a copy of which will be placed in the Library, provides detailed advice to health authorities on all aspects of land transactions including the disposal of surplus property.

"The Health Service Today"

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many copies of the leaflet "The Health Service Today" July 1986, were printed; how they were circulated; and what has been the total cost of the operation.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of producing the pamphlet, "The Health Service Today"; how many have been printed; and by what method they were circulated to National Health Service staff.

Mrs. Currie: Six hundred thousand copies of the leaflet "The Health Service Today" were printed, at a cost of £10,900. Copies were sent to all Members of Parliament representing English constituents and to the press. The main distribution is through regional health authorities and family practitioner committees.

Specialist Postgraduate Hospitals

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action has been taken about the future funding of the specialist postgraduate hospitals, which became part of district health authorities on re-organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Funding for the specialist postgraduate hospitals was separately identified from the financial year 1982-83 for a period of three years, during which time the regional and district health authorities concerned have been developing their own plans. The right hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the two regional health authorities concerned — North East and South East Thames — for further details.

Retirement

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost in a full year of implementing a retirement age of 60 years for men *(a)* gross of benefit savings and *(b)* net of benefit savings.

Mr. Major: Reliable estimates of the costs of reducing men's pension age are extremely difficult because they are highly sensitive to what assumptions are made about how change would affect retirement behaviour and labour market behaviour. At present, our best estimate is that a reduction in men's pension age to 60 would involve a gross cost approaching £5,000 million in a full year. The estimated net cost is about £3,000 million.

Hypothermia

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of deaths in each month in 1985 and 1986 *(a)* in which hypothermia was cited as a contributory factor and *(b)* in which hypothermia was cited as the cause.

Mrs. Currie: The tables show the number of deaths registered in England and Wales by month for 1985 and to the latest available month of 1986 *(a)* with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it was or was not stated as the underlying cause of death, and *(b)* with hypothermia stated as the underlying cause of death. The figures for underlying cause for 1986 exclude deaths at age under 28 days. This is because of the introduction of a neonatal death certificate on 1 January 1986, from which it is not possible to assign an underlying cause of death.

(a) Number of deaths registered by month with any mention of hypothermia on death certificate

England and Wales — *1985-86*

Month of registration	*1985*	*1986*
January	211	102
February	165	174
March	131	190
April	76	106
May	49	69
June	23	32
July	13	12
August	11	13
September	13	17
October	23	n/a
November	44	n/a
December	68	n/a

(b) Number of deaths registered by month with hypothermia as underlying cause of death[1]

England and Wales — *1985-86*

Month of registration	*1985*	*1986*[2]
January	106	41
February	89	86
March	81	109
April	47	65
May	28	36
June	12	18
July	11	6
August	7	6
September	2	7
October	11	n/a
November	20	n/a
December	26	n/a

Note:

All figures for 1986 are provisional.

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision 991.6 and 778.3.

[2] Excludes deaths under age 28 days.

n/a = not available

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he intends to take in the winter of 1986-87 to prevent further deaths from hypothermia.

Mr. Major: The Government are supporting initiatives to provide elderly people and those caring for them with advice on how to minimise the effects of cold. A comprehensive new pack of training materials and information on this subject for those in contact with elderly people is being launched today by the Health Education Council. "Warmth in Winter", a leaflet published by the council containing simple, practical advice on keeping warm, aimed directly at elderly people, will also continue to be available.

Considerable help is given towards heating costs through the supplementary benefit scale rates and weekly heating additions. Furthermore, the Government have referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee proposals for a new, simplified system of exceptionally severe weather payments.

Benefits

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Leeds metropolitan district council area are in receipt of *(a)* child benefit, *(b)* housing benefit, *(c)* additional heating allowance, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* mobility allowance and *(f)* sickness benefit for the latest date available.

Mr. Lyell: The information is as follows:

Housing benefit: information is not available in the precise form requested. The estimated number of rate rebate recipients in the Leeds City Council area in 1985-86 was 99,000.

Invalidity benefit and sickness benefit: no separate figures are available for these benefits. However, at 23 September 1986 there were 13,351 people in the

area receiving benefit on account of incapacity for work. (This figure excludes people living in the Wetherby area, because of local office boundaries.)

Child benefit and mobility allowance: these benefits are administered centrally and there is no information specific to Leeds.

Additional heating allowance: the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at excessive cost.

AIDS

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute a television advertising campaign advising the public of the danger of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: We are committed to further public education and are actively considering ways of taking this forward, including the use of television.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is proposing to introduce screening for long-term visitors to the United Kingdom from countries with a high incidence of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 24 October.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he now intends to introduce regulations to make acquired immune deficiency syndrome a notifiable disease.

Mr. Newton: A system of voluntary reporting of cases on a confidential basis to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre has been established, and we have taken no decision to go beyond this.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is proposing to encourage the carrying of suitable identity cards by acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus carriers.

Mr. Newton: This is a matter for individual AIDS virus carriers to decide in the light of the counselling provided by health authorities in connection with tests.

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the current estimated cost of the rehabilitation works in the cardiac wing at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children;

(2) what is the esitmated date of completion of the rehabilitation works on the cardiac wing at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children.

Mrs. Currie: The current estimated cost of rehabilitation work to the cardiac wing, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children is £11,766,000 (exclusive of fees and equipment).

The current estimated date of completion of rehabilitation works is 28 February 1987.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many exceptionally severe weather payments have been made so far in 1986 to claimants in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales; and in the case of each country, what was the total amount awarded.

Mr. Lyell: The information is not yet available. Local offices have been asked to make a return so that the number of payments and amounts paid can be calculated. I shall write to the right hon. Member when all of these returns have been received.

Heating Additions

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the total expenditure during 1985 on all heating additions *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in Scotland.

Mr. Lyell: The latest available information on receipt of heating additions in Great Britain is for December 1984. A copy of the annual statistical inquiry for that year is in the Library. It is estimated that expenditure in Great Britain in 1984-85 was approximately £400 million. I regret that no separate estimate is available of expenditure on heating additions in Scotland.

Information in respect of Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what rates of heating additions are presently available; and how many people in Scotland received each category of heating addition in 1984.

Mr. Lyell: The detailed criteria for receiving heating additions are contained in regulations 11-12 and schedule 4 (part I) of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations (SI 1983 No. 1399). The rates of addition presently available are shown in the table. Where a claimant is receiving the long-term rate, the available scale margin, presently £1, is offset against the value of additional requirements (including heating additions, with the exception of those paid in respect of children under five). I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply concerning heating additions paid in Scotland in 1984 as soon as possible.

Rates of heating addition (July 1986)

Type of heating addition	*Rate* £
Health and/or accommodation heating addition	
Basic rate	2·20
Higher rate	5·55
Disabled persons heating addition	5·55
Sick or disabled persons heating addition	2·20
Age related heating addition	
Child under 5	2·20
Householder over 65	2·20
Householder over 85	5·55
Estate rate heating addition	
1-4 rooms	4·40
5 rooms or over	8·80
Central heating addition[1]	
1-4 rooms	2·20
5 rooms or over	4·40
Specific charge heating additions	Varies depending on charge

[1] Payable only to those continuously entitled to a central heating addition since before 5 August 1985.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what current amounts are deducted from certificated housing benefit for *(a)* heating, *(b)* cooking, *(c)* hot water and *(d)* lighting.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given by my predecessor to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) on 11 February at columns *436-37*. There has been no change since then except that the limit for heating increased from £6·55 to £6·70 from 28 July.

National Blood Products Laboratory

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why the National Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree is behind schedule, when it was originally due to open; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the National Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree will be open;

(3) what estimate he has made of the financial implications for regional health authorities of the delay in the operation of the National Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 24 October 1986]: We expect the new blood products laboratory to be completed during the early part of 1987. Given the "design and build" method used for this development the completion date was impossible to forecast accurately at the outset when we had expected that completion would be a year or so earlier. There is no single identifiable reason for the building taking longer than originally expected other than the complexity of the design being greater than anticipated.

Regional health authorities will need to continue to purchase blood products commercially until the new blood products laboratory is operating fully. The cost of purchasing commercially is currently estimated at around £15 million per annum.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many complaints claiming discrimination against disabled people he received in each year from 1980 to 1985, inclusive; and what his findings were and responses in each case;

(2) how many representations about cases of alleged discrimination against disabled people he has received in each of the years 1980 to 1985 and in the first nine months of the current year; how many such allegations were proved; and what action he took in each case.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to the replies*, 24 July 1986, c. *437*, and 21 October 1986, c. *868*]: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the cases sent to us to investigate as a result of the invitation issued at that time to responsible organisations and hon. Members by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) to send him details of such cases. Since 1 January 1983, 27 cases have been sent to us for consideration and the number investigated in each year was as follows:

	Cases
1983	22
1984	3
1985	2
1986 (first 9 months)	None

There are five cases still under consideration. In those cases where investigations have been completed:

We judged there was no evidence of discrimination in five cases.

There were genuine problems of access in four cases.

Two cases involved commercial judgments, the basis of which could not effectively be checked.

One case concerned maritime regulations laid before Parliament.

One case was a complaint by a disabled person against an employee who was subsequently disciplined for acting against the general policy of the employer.

One case involved a conflict of opinion over the application of "right to buy" housing legislation.

In three cases insufficient information was provided to enable inquiries to be pursued.

Three cases involved judgments by a potential employer, or in one case, a motor sport event organiser, that the individual's disability adversely affected their ability to perform the job in question effectively or safely.

In two cases the problem was resolved in favour of the complainant during the course of our inquiries.

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the maternal deaths registered in England and Wales in 1979 to 1984 were of women born in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the Republic of Ireland, *(c)* the New Commonwealth, *(d)* India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, *(e)* the West Indies, *(f)* Africa, *(g)* Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus, *(h)* New Commonwealth countries not included in *(a)* to *(h)* and *(j)* country unstated; and if he will subdivide these into (i) direct maternal deaths, (ii) indirect maternal deaths, (iii) fortuitous maternal deaths and (iv) late maternal deaths.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 October 1986]: The table shows the number of deaths registered in England and Wales from 1979 to 1984 by selected country of birthplace for (i) direct and (ii) indirect maternal deaths. From the statistics of death registrations, it is not possible to identify separately either fortuitous or late maternal deaths.

Number of maternal deaths by selected country of birthplace of woman: underlying cause (i) direct (ii) indirect maternal deaths
England and Wales 1979 to 1984

	Year					
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Country of birthplace[1]						
(a) United Kingdom						
(i)	56	45	39	31	40	36
(ii)	5	4	7	3	6	10
(b) Republic of Ireland						
(i)	—	—	—	—	—	—
(ii)	—	—	—	—	—	—
(c) New Commonwealth						
(i)	8	11	6	5	4	5

	Year					
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
(ii)	1	3	2	—	—	—
(d) India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka						
(i)	3	8	4	3	—	4
(ii)	—	1	2	—	—	—
(e) West Indies (Caribbean)						
(i)	3	3	3	—	1	1
(ii)	1	2	—	—	—	—
(f) Africa						
(i)	1	4	—	3	6	1
(ii)	—	—	1	—	—	—
(g) Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus						
(i)	1	—	—	—	—	—
(ii)	—	—	—	—	—	—
(h) New Commonwealth not included in (a)-(h)						
(i)	—	—	—	—	—	—
(ii)	—	—	—	—	—	—
(j) Country unstated						
(i)	—	1	—	—	—	—
(ii)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total all countries						
(i)	67	62	46	39	48	42
(ii)	7	8	11	3	6	10

(i) International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision 630 to 676 excluding 647 and 648.
(ii) ICD (9) 647 and 648.
[1] As defined in 1981 Census Country of Birth volume.

National Association of Young People in Care

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a decision has yet been reached on the application by the National Association of Young People in Care for financial assistance over the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 October 1986]: Officials of the Department met with the association last week to discuss the grant application. The association agreed to provide additional information and a decision will be reached as soon as possible after this is received. Meantime an interim grant has been paid.

Drug Misuse

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the number of deaths attributable to drug abuse, particularly heroin addiction, in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and whether there is any discernible relationship between known or estimated length of level of addiction and age of death.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 October 1986]: The following table shows separately numbers of deaths where the underlying cause was drug dependence and non-dependent abuse of drugs, particularly morphine type drugs. Information on the relationship between length of level of addiction and age of death is not held centrally.

England and Wales

ICD Codes 9th Rev		1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
304	Drug dependence	61	132	108	102	127
304·0	Drug dependence, morphine type[1]	29	58	64	50	47
305·2 305·9	Non-dependent abuse of drugs	3	10	4	25	52
305·5	Non-dependent abuse of morphine type drugs	1	3	1	4	14

[1] Morphine type includes heroin, methadone and opium and its derivatives.

Diabetics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make blood glucose monitoring equipment and plastic syringes available on National Health Service prescription for diabetics.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 October 1986]: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 23 October and to my replies to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) during the debate on the motion for the Adjournment on the same date, at columns 1431-36.

SCOTLAND

Railway Station, Prestwick

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has held on the possibility of opening a new railway station at Prestwick; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: This proposal has been the subject of discussion between the British Airports Authority, British Rail and Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive. I understand that there were practical difficulties associated with the provision of a station at the airport. However, the

courtesy bus service between the airport and Prestwick town station which emerged from these discussions is proving to be very successful and popular with passengers.

Road Passenger Transport (Jobs)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of all categories of personnel employed in the road passenger transport industry in Scotland as at June 1979 and the same date in each year to 1986.

Mr. Ancram: The total numbers of personnel employed by operators of public service vehicles, as at 31 December 1985, for the years 1979-1985, are as follows:

Year	*Numbers*
1979	24,562
1980	23,807
1981	22,170
1982	21,302
1983	21,704
1984	21,316
[1]1985	20,300

[1] The 1985 figure is an average over the whole year as the method of collecting statistics was changed in 1985.

Figures for 1986 are not yet available. There are no equivalent figures for persons employed in the hire-car industry.

Erskine Bridge Toll

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he will now abolish the Erskine bridge toll; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: No.

Ferries

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what reduction there has been in the number of people working for state owned ferries in Scotland since 1 January 1985.

Mr. Ancram: The staff complement of Caledonian MacBrayne was 777 in 1985 and 776 in 1986.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce an equivalent grant along the lines of a road equivalent tariff to offset the cost of ferry transport in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the statement my right hon. Friend made on 21 February 1984, at columns 697-98.

Airports

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the privatisation of Scottish airports.

Mr. Ancram: The four British Airports Authority airports at Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Prestwick will be privatised as subsidiary companies of British Airports Authority plc next year. There will be a Scottish subsidiary holding company, Scottish Airports plc. There are no plans to privatise any other Scottish airports.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps Her Majesty's Government take to regulate tourist traffic at Scottish airports.

Mr. Lang: The British Tourist Authority is the main vehicle for the promotion of overseas tourism to the United Kingdom and does much to encourage visitors to Scotland by all modes of transport. The Scottish Tourist Board is active in considering and promoting ways in which air travel for the prospective tourist to Scotland can be improved. The board's overseas promotion programme, while supplementary to that of the British Tourist Authority, includes a number of marketing ventures in North America, Scandinavia and Germany. These ventures should help to increase arrival at Scottish airports. In particular, "Gateway Scotland" missions in the United States and Canada are geared to promoting direct flights to Scotland.

Rural Scotland

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the disincentive to the development of rural Scotland which results from high air fares from other parts of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In general, air fares in Europe are far too high and this is disadvantageous to industry, particularly in remote areas. That is why we are making strenuous efforts, both bilaterally and within the European Community, to allow a greater degree of airline competition.

Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his written answer to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West on 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *471*, and 25 June 1986, *Official Report*, column *200*, what response he has had from his inspectorate about discharges from generating stations.

Mr. Ancram: The inspectorate investigations are continuing. I shall send the hon. Member a copy of the results of the analyses when they are available.

School Leavers

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school leavers in 1986 within the Banff and Buchan area registered with his Department; and how many are still without employment.

Mr. Lang: The number of unemployed school leavers claiming benefit, aged under 18, in the Banff and Buchan parliamentary constituency on 11 September 1986, the latest date for which information is available, totalled 125. Information about school leaver unemployment is available in the Library, but the statistics do not indicate the date of leaving school.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of (i) males, (ii) females and (iii) young unemployed in the Banff and Buchan constituency since 1983 and the latest figures.

Mr. Lang: The number of (i) males, (ii) females and (iii) young unemployed claimants in the Banff and Buchan parliamentary constituency in each year from 1983 to 1986

is shown in the table. Due to the changes which have taken place in the compilation of the unemployment statistics the figures are not directly comparable. Detailed information is available in the Library.

Unemployed Claimants in Banff and Buchan Constituency

Year	Males (September)	Females	Young Unemployed (under 18) (July)
1983	2,084	1,135	189
1984	1,923	1,208	170
1985	1,815	1,181	185
1986	2,330	1,352	226

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many long-term unemployed were registered with his Department in the Banff and Buchan area for the years 1983 to the latest figures available for 1986, by age category.

Mr. Lang: The total number of unemployed claimants by age in the Banff and Buchan parliamentary constituency group who had been unemployed for more than one year in July of each year from 1983 to 1986 is shown in the table. This information is available in the Library. Due to the changes which have taken place in the compilation of the unemployment statistics the figures are not directly comparable.

Unemployed claimants more than one year
Banff and Buchan constituency

Age group	July 1983	July 1984	July 1985	July 1986
Under 17	0	0	0	0
17	10	6	9	15
18	27	25	27	26
19	28	36	23	24
20-24	132	122	126	113
25-29	100	115	109	120
30-34	87	112	100	100
35-39	79	104	99	98
40-44	62	81	81	96
45-49	82	104	109	121
50-54	94	134	129	125
55-59	124	154	178	185
60 and over	29	20	13	5
Total	854	1,013	1,003	1,028

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of those working in manufacturing industry in Dundee in 1979; and what is the latest available figure.

Mr. Lang: The estimated number working in manufacturing plants with over 10 employees in Dundee city in 1979 was 29,200 and in 1985 was 15,900. These estimates are taken from the regional data system (RDS). No reliable information is available from this source for plants with fewer than 10 employees. The estimate for 1985 is provisional.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of people in Dundee unemployed for one year or more in each year since 1979; and what percentage of the total number of the unemployed they make up in each case.

Mr. Lang: The number of people unemployed for one year or more in the Dundee travel-to-work area in July of each year since 1979, and the percentage of the total unemployed they represent, is shown in the table. This information is available in the Library. The figures are not directly comparable due to the various changes which have taken place in the compilation of the statistics.

Unemployed over one year
Dundee travel-to-work area

Year (July)	Number	Percentage of all unemployed
1979	2,437	26·8
1980	2,640	22·6
1981	4,151	27·4
1982	6,045	38·5
1983	6,012	36·5
1984	6,778	41·1
1985	7,232	42·1
1986	6,997	42·7

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present number of young people in Dundee who have never had a job since leaving school.

Mr. Lang: At 11 September, the latest date for which information is available, the number of people under the age of 18 in the city of Dundee local authority district who have not had a job since leaving school totalled 747.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average number of people unemployed in Dundee in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The average number of people unemployed in the Dundee travel-to-work area since 1979 is shown in the table. This information is available in the Library. Due to the various changes which have taken place in the compilation of the unemployment statistics the figures are not directly comparable.

Dundee travel-to-work area

Year	Average Unemployed
1979	8,668
1980	10,861
1981	14,723
1982	15,611
1983	15,943
1984	16,423
1985	16,917
[1]1986	16,329

[1] To date.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will disaggregate the latest available unemployment figures for Dundee by age group.

Mr. Lang: At 10 July 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants disaggregated by age group in the city of Dundee local authority district was as shown in the table. This information is available in the Library.

City of Dundee Local Authority District

Age Group	Number of Unemployed Claimants
Under 17	301
Aged 17	596
Aged 18	760
Aged 19	775
Aged 20-24	3,567

Age Group	Number of Unemployed Claimants
Aged 25-29	2,282
Aged 30-34	1,572
Aged 35-39	1,271
Aged 40-44	980
Aged 45-49	921
Aged 50-54	1,064
Aged 55-59	1,175
Aged 60 and over	181
Total	15,445

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number and percentage of those unemployed in Dundee who have been out of work for *(a)* up to one year, *(b)* up to two years and *(c)* up to three years.

Mr. Lang: At 10 July 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the city of Dundee local authority district by duration, and the percentage each category represents of the total number of unemployed claimants, was as follows. This information is available in the Library.

City of Dundee local authority district

Duration of unemployment	Number of unemployed claimants	Percentage of total number of unemployed claimants
Up to 1 year	8,749	56·6
1 to 2 years	2,462	15·9
2 to 3 years	1,255	8·1

Hypothermia

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* figures to show the number of deaths in Scotland with a mention of hypothermia on the death certificate for each month during 1985; and if he will do likewise for each month of 1986 so far.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia, Scotland, 1985 and 1986.

	1985	[1]1986
January	65	54
February	35	28
March	24	28
April	19	16
May	7	7
June	1	2
July	3	2
August	7	8
September	6	9
October	6	n/a
November	32	n/a
December	27	n/a
Total	232	156

[1] Provisional figures.

Rates

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures to show, for each year since 1973, the average level of domestic rates, net of rates relief, payable as a percentage of gross household income, excluding those households where rebates are received.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1986]: Information to exclude households where rebates are received from data for average domestic rates or gross household income is not available. The estimated average domestic rates bill as a percentage of gross household income in Scotland since 1973 is set out in the table.

Local authority financial year

	Percentage
1973-74	2·76
1974-75	2·64
1975-76	2·88
[1]1976-77	2·84
[2]1977-78	2·81
1978-79	2·26
1979-80	2·35
1980-81	2·72
1981-82	3·26
1982-83	3·57
1983-84	3·46

[1] May to March—10½ months.
[2] April to March.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average unrebated domestic rates bill in Scotland, excluding local authority hereditaments in each year since 1973.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1986]: The estimated average unrebated domestic rates bill (including water rates) in Scotland, excluding local authority lands and heritages, in each year since 1973 is set out in the table.

Local authority financial year

	£
[1]1973-74	70
1974-75	82
[2]1975-76	108
[3]1976-77	123
1977-78	142
1978-79	139
1979-80	160
1980-81	214
1981-82	293
1982-83	335
1983-84	341
1984-85	357
1985-86	431
1986-87	458

[1] May to May.
[2] May to March—10½ months.
[3] April to March.

M9 (Traffic Control)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the M9 motorway between Glenfarg and the Forth bridge has been subject to width restrictions or contra-flow arrangements during October 1986; and if he will estimate how many traffic cones were placed on that section of road during that period.

Mr. Ancram: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the M90, and not the M9. Four sections of the M90 totalling 10·6 km, about 34 per cent. of the length between Glenfarg and the Forth Road bridge, have had such restrictions this month to enable structural repairs to be carried out. The number of traffic cones is governed by safety requirements, which have recently been strengthened.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 29 October 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

County Courts (Hearings)

Mr. Rowlands asked the Attorney-General what is the average time for appointments before the registrar in the county courts of England and Wales for *(a)* maintenance hearings and *(b)* access hearings.

The Attorney-General: The average waiting time for an appointment before a registrar in county courts in England and Wales is six to eight weeks for both maintenance and access hearings.

BBC (Libel Action)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General what action the Director of Public Prosecutions has taken in the light of the evidence of alleged interference with witnesses to the Hamilton-Howarth BBC trial submitted to the police by the hon. Member for Workington.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the only document provided by the hon. Member to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police is a letter dated 24 November 1984 from Mr. Philip Pedley to Mr. J. S. Gummer, then chairman of the Conservative party. This letter does not justify any police inquiry. No evidence of the nature suggested in the question has been made available to the Director.

ENERGY

North Sea Oil

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many barrels of crude oil and liquids have been produced in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea in 1986 to date; at what average daily rate; and what his forecast is for production for the whole of 1986.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: United Kingdom North sea production of crude oil and liquids up to the end of August 1986 was 656 million barrels; giving an average daily rate of 2·70 million barrels per day.

Our current expectation for the whole of 1986 is the mid-point of the Brown Book range of 920 to 1,035 million barrels.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

South Africa

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list all aid and the geographical location of the recipients which his Department has given to black people in South Africa;

(2) what funding from the Overseas Development Agency budget, and for what projects, has been given to assist black people in South Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1985 Her Majesty's Government made available almost £1 million, mainly in the fields of education and training, for non-white South Africans. Nearly £700,000 of this was provided direct from aid programme funds; a further £227,000 was spent by the British Council, of which £90,000 was financed by the aid programme. The greater part of the total spending is used to provide training places in Britain. We also support with advice, books and equipment a number of educational and community projects in the Republic of South Africa. The projects are located in different parts of the republic in both rural and urban areas.

WALES

Regional Aid

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for the last year for which figures are available, the total amounts of financial assistance made available for the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales, respectively, both in total and per head of the insured population for the areas covered.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is as follows:

	Total resources 1985-86	*Resources per member of the economically active population of the area served by each body*[2]
	£ million[1]	*£*
Welsh Development Agency	67·2	57
Development Board for Rural Wales	15·1	197

[1] These figures include Government grants and income generated by the bodies themselves, including proceeds from the sale of land and buildings and rents.

[2] The term "economically active" population corresponds broadly with the insured population. The figures quoted are derived from the economically active population in Wales in 1981—the last date on which figures are readily available.

Highways Act 1980

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985, the applications received for the making by him of public path creation, diversion and extinguishment orders under the powers in sections 26(2) and 120(3) of the Highways Act 1980 stating in each case *(a)* the community concerned and the number of the footpath or bridleway, *(b)* whether the application was for a creation, diversion or extinguishment order, *(c)* whether he agreed to prepare a draft order and *(d)* where a draft order was prepared, whether or not it subsequently was made.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There have been no applications.

PRIME MINISTER

Service Communications (Report)

Mr. Kinnock asked the Prime Minister whether she has yet received the report of the Security Commission on the

security arrangements at 9 Signal Regiment and the other static communications units of all three services; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Though the members of 9 Signal Regiment who had been charged with offences under the Official Secrets Acts were acquitted, it was clear that some questions remained to be answered about the security arrangements at this and other static communications units of the armed services. As I announced to the House on 12 November 1985, I therefore invited the Security Commission:

"To consider the measures already in hand for improving security arrangements at 9 Signal Regiment and the other static communications units of all three Services, and to advise whether these are adequate or whether any further changes are necessary or desirable."

The commission has now completed its task and has submitted its report. I am most grateful to the chairman, Lord Griffiths, and to Lord Justice Lloyd, Lord Allen of Abbeydale and General Sir Hugh Beach for their work. A Command Paper is being published this afternoon giving the full text of the commission's report, save for five appendices which contain highly classified information which it would not be in the public interest to disclose.

The commission has had access to detailed information about the reviews of security procedures at 9 Signal Regiment and other units which have been carried out by the Ministry of Defence, and I understand that it has taken oral evidence from those who conducted the reviews. In its report the commission commends the urgency and thoroughness of the work which the Ministry of Defence has undertaken, and the speed and readiness with which the recommendations emanating from those reviews were accepted. The commission has endorsed those recommendations and has made three additional ones:

(i.) That there should be random searches of baggage and clothing, including pockets and an occasional "frisk" at static communications units.

(ii.) That any information compiled by a unit security officer indicating that an individual might be "at risk" should be passed on to the next unit security officer when the individual is posted.

(iii.) That, so far as possible, postings of very young service men and women to Cyprus, or to other sensitive locations, should be avoided.

The security objectives set by the commission in these recommendations are fully accepted, and the Ministry of Defence is now urgently considering how to implement them most effectively. The commission believes that when these and the earlier recommendations are fully implemented, everything that can be done will be being done to ensure that, so far as it is humanly possible to do so, the danger of further breaches of security at these highly sensitive units is minimised.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EEC (Interest on Payments)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost of lost interest in United Kingdom payments to the EEC paid in advance of the due date.

Mr. Brooke: There is in effect no interest cost: wherever an advance payment is requested, the Government always take care to ensure that, without it, the Commission would have to draw down and overdraw its non-interest-bearing accounts with member states and/or delay payments to member states.

Northern Ireland (Territorial Block Formula)

Mr. Fallon asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the working of the public expenditure territorial block formula for Northern Ireland will be revised to take account of moneys pledged by the United States Government for future financial years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: No. The United States authorities have announced contributions to the international fund for Ireland which the United Kingdom and Irish Governments have agreed to establish. The fund will be used to stimulate private investment and enterprise, to supplement public programmes and to encourage voluntary efforts. These contributions will not affect the working of the formula used in the public expenditure survey to calculate changes to the Northern Ireland public expenditure block budget.

Income Tax

Mr. Leighton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the standard rate of income tax in each year since 1956.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is in the table:

Standard/Basic Rate of Income Tax
1956-57 to 1986-87

Year	*Standard Rate*	*Year*	*Standard Rate/Basic Rate*	*Year*	*Basic Rate*
	Per cent.		*Per cent*		*Per cent.*
1956-57	42·50 (33·06)	1966-67	41·25 (32·08)	1976-77	35·00
1957-58	42·50 (33·06)	1967-68	41·25 (32·08)	1977-78	34·00
1958-59	42·50 (33·06)	1968-69	41·25 (32·08)	1978-79	33·00
1959-60	38·75 (30·14)	1969-70	41·25 (32·08)	1979-80	30·00
1960-61	38·75 (30·14)	1970-71	41·25 (32·08)	1980-81	30·00
1961-62	38·75 (30·14)	1971-72	38·75 (30·14)	1981-82	30·00
1962-63	38·75 (30·14)	1972-73	38·75 (30·14)	1982-83	30·00
1963-64	38·75 (30·14)	1973-74	30·00	1983-84	30·00
1964-65	38·75 (30·14)	1974-75	33·00	1984-85	30·00
1965-66	41·25 (32·08)	1975-76	35·00	1985-86	30·00
				1986-87	29·00

Note: Under unification, the standard rate of income tax was replaced in 1973-74 by the basic rate. For years before 1973-74, the figures in brackets show the effect of the standard rate after allowing for earned income relief of $\frac{1}{9}$ on the first £4,005 of earned income.

Debt (Householders)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the increase in the ratio of debt to householders' income since 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Personal sector liabilities have risen from 57 per cent. of personal disposable income in 1979 to 85 per cent. in 1985. Personal sector liquid assets, excluding notes and coin, have risen from 65 per cent. of personal disposable income to 82 per cent. over the same period. Figures for the household sector are not available.

Interest and Exchange Rates

Mr. Janner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of exchange and interest rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The sterling index closed at 67·8 on 28 October. Base rates are 11 per cent.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will make a statement about the current level of interest rates;

(2) if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Base rates are 11 per cent.

Infrastructure (Expenditure)

Mr. Boyes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about current levels of Government expenditure on the infrastructure.

Mr. MacGregor: A number of representations have been received.

National Health Service

Mr. Pavitt asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to public expenditure of each 1 per cent. increase in the proportion of gross domestic product devoted to the National Health Service.

Mr. MacGregor: In 1985-86 it would have cost £3·6 billion to increase public expnditure on the health services of the United Kingdom by one percentage point of GDP.

Public Services (Funding)

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he employs in determining which public services should receive funding from the taxpayer.

Mr. MacGregor: Decisions on the funding of public services are taken in the annual public expenditure survey. This takes account not only of the Government's priorities for public expenditure, but also such factors as value for money. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be publishing expenditure plans for the next three years in his forthcoming autumn statement.

North Sea (Oil and Gas Revenues)

Mr. Rowlands asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much Her Majesty's Government have so far collected in oil and gas revenue from the North sea in the current financial year; and what his estimate is for the whole of 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production amounted to £1·3 billion in the first half of the 1986-87 financial year. The "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1986-87" included a forecast of £6·1 billion for the whole year. A revised forecast will be included in the 1986 autumn statement.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the number of British Overseas Trade Board staff serving in the United Kingdom and abroad for each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Export promotion services, under the guidance of the BOTB, are provided by the Department of Trade and Industry in England, by the Scottish Office in Scotland, by the Welsh Office in Wales and by the Industrial Development Board in Northern Ireland. In carrying out its work overseas the BOTB calls on the resources of the FCO.

The numbers of DTI staff providing export promotion services under the guidance of the BOTB are as follows:

	Number
1979	1,217
1980	1,123
1981	995
1982	933
1983	913
1984	818
1985	748
1986	728

Note: The figures are based on an estimate of the time spent by some staff on other work such as trade policy and trade relations. They include DTI regional office staff. Because of organisation changes in the period there are variations which mean that the figures are not completely comparable.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the reductions that have been made in British Overseas Trade Board export services for each year since 1979 in terms of reductions in, or the elimination of specific services.

Mr. Alan Clark: Numerous changes in, and adjustments to, BOTB services have been made, including many designed to improve value for money. Some services have been expanded. The main services withdrawn have been:

Overseas Traders List (1980). A computerised version of this service is expected to be introduced in 1987.

Institute of Directors' scheme for bringing overseas students to the UK for very short visits (1985).

The market entry guarantee scheme was suspended early this year, because it overran its budget. This is pending the outcome of a review of its effectiveness.

The main reductions in services have been:

Export marketing research scheme — limit placed on number of times single company could use service 81986).

Overseas projects fund — firms now eligible only where help is likely to increase chances of significant orders for UK (1981).

Overseas trade fairs — number of events supported annually reduced from about 350 to about 300 between 1979 and 1986. South Africa now excluded.

Outward missions — number of events supported annually reduced from about 220 to about 145 between 1979 and 1986. North America and South Africa now excluded as destinations.

Inward missions and VIP visits — number of events supported annually reduced from about 100 to about 65 between 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list *(a)* those export services available to industry and administered by the British Overseas Trade Board which were free in 1979 and for which a charge is now made and *(b)* in respect of which services that were charged for in 1979 the fees have since been increased and by how much.

Mr. Alan Clark: The only service now charged for which was free in 1979 is the provision of tender documents and project lists through the export intelligence service, which are now charged for at £2 and £5 per set respectively.

The main increases in charges since 1979 are as follows:

Market prospects service — export representative, currently charged at £175 and £125 per report respectively replaced agency funding service at £50 + VAT.

Overseas status report now cost £21 + VAT compared with £10 + VAT in 1979.

Overseas projects fund — a premium of 15 per cent. is now charged on repayment of BOTB assistance when contract won.

Export intelligence service: charge increased from 30p per notice in 1979 to 40p at present.

Fees for participants in joint ventures at overseas trade fairs have been increased from flat charges of from £4·50 to £18 per square metre in 1979 to percentages of direct costs (currently 40 per cent. for first time participant, 55 per cent. for second time, 75 per cent. others). Changes have been made in the method of calculating travel grants, especially for regular participants in overseas trade fairs and export missions, which have almost certainly involved reductions in real terms.

Overseas seminar participation fees have been increased from £150 to £300.

Percentage of eligible expenditure reimbursed under the overseas advertising scheme for UK fairs have been reduced from between 50 and 25 per cent. in 1979 to between 40 and 20 per cent. in 1986.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the priority given by his Department to export services; and whether he has any proposals to increase or extend the range of British Overseas Trade Board services and the resources devoted to them.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are committed to maintaining a balanced programme of export services through the BOTB. These services are kept under continuous review to ensure that they are operating effectively to the benefit of exporters, and provide value for money. The possible introduction of new services, or the withdrawal of existing ones, is reviewed as part of this process.

Commercial Representatives

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the number of his Department's staff serving abroad as commercial representatives for each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Department of Trade and Industry staff serving abroad on loan to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at 31 March each year were as follows:

	Number
1979	32
1980	34
1981	34
1982	34
1983	31
1984	20
1985	19
1986	21

Note: Not all these staff would have been engaged wholly in commercial work.

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much is being spent on industrial support in the northern region in the current year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the last 12 months (period 1 October 1985 to 30 September 1986) a total of £114·6 million was spent on industrial support in the northern region. The corresponding figure for the first nine months of this calendar year was £93·6 million.

Investment

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those companies which have inwardly invested in the United Kingdom during the last five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Tripartite Business Ventures

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department is taking to promote tripartite business ventures by United Kingdom, United States and Japanese partners, such as that by Cable and Wireless plc in international telecommunications; and if he will give the number of such tripartite ventures of which his Department is aware.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government seek by a variety of means to promote co-operation between British companies on the one hand and US and Japanese companies on the other. Apart from the Cable and Wireless venture referred to, my Department is aware of one other of comparable scale involving British, US and Japanese companies.

Productivity

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the statistics on productivity in the private and public sectors for the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: This information is not separately available for the public and private sectors.

Copyright

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what priority he accords to the protection of copyright in intellectual property and innovation in the promotion of high technology industries.

Mr. Pattie: The protection of intellectual property serves to secure a fair reward for innovators. It is therefore an incentive to innovation and thus an important factor in the promotion of high technology industries.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement regarding the current balance of imports and exports; and if he will publish statistics for the preceeding 12-month period.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ended September there was a surplus at £403 million on the current account.

Schools and Industry

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the various programmes encouraging interaction between schools and industry; and if he will give the number of corporate and student participants in each .

Mr. Pattie: There are a great many ways in which schools and industry work together, and there are a large number of organisations, both at local and national level, which seek to encourage them. There is no requirement on schools and industry to notify their involvement, however, and so the detailed information that my hon. Friend requires is not collected centrally. I am, however, pleased to say that Industry Year 1986 has led to a considerable increase in liaison between schools and industry and it is estimated that some 60 per cent. of schools now have formal links with at least one company, and the number is growing. Many of the others have more informal arrangements with companies.

I am also placing in the Library copies of a directory of "Schools Industry Links" published by the Department of Education and Science and my Department, which describes the work of the main national organisations in this area.

Regional Aid

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, for the last year for which figures are available, what was the total amount of financial assistance made available as regional aid to each United Kingdom assisted area; and if he will express these figures as the amount per head of the insured population for the areas covered.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The most recent figures available for regional aid as defined are provisional estimates for 1985-86. Payments and payments per head made under the conditions for assistance relating to the pre-29 November 1984 assisted areas were as follows:

TABLE 1

Assisted areas (pre-29 November 1984 definitions)	*SDA*		*DA*		*IA*	
	Payments[1] *(£ million)*	*Payments per head*[2] *£*	*Payments*[1] *(£ million)*	*Payments per head*[2] *£*	*Payments*[1] *(£ million)*	*Payments per head*[2] *£*
Scotland	106·3	87·72	30·6	94·33	2·9	32·78
Wales	63·2	234·13	36·2	59·56	1·6	10·57
Northern	44·4	48·41	27·4	141·46	0·6	6·43
North West	59·3	83·52	5·7	27·12	2·2	5·71
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	—	22·4	54·47	2·7	6·13
East Midlands	—	—	5·9	195·53	0·5	17·34
South West	1·6	47·10	7·7	33·51	0·4	3·49

[1] All figures are gross and include payments to nationalised industries.
[2] Information on the insured population is not available in terms of pre-29 November 1984 assisted area coverage. Therefore payments per head have been calculated using estimates of the working population for these areas.
Note: The items included in the expenditure are section 7, regional selective assistance and old regional development grants under the Industrial Development Act 1982.

Payments and payments per head (provisional basis) for regional aid as defined below made under the conditions for assistance relating to the post-28 November 1984 assisted areas were as follows:

Table 2

Assisted areas (post-28 November 1984 definitions)	*DA*		*IA*	
	Payments[3,4] *(£ million)*	*Payments per head*[5] *(£)*	*Payments*[3,4] *(£ million)*	*Payments per head*[5] *(£)*
Scotland	14·5	12·65	0·2	0·58
Wales	20·1	53·12	10·5	17·88
Northern	19·0	20·72	2·4	14·87

Assisted areas (post-28 November 1984 definitions)	DA Payments[3,4] (£ million)	DA Payments per head[5] (£)	IA Payments[3,4] (£ million)	IA Payments per head[5] (£)
North West	16·7	17·04	2·8	3·02
Yorkshire and Humberside	6·4	39·31	2·8	2·98
East Midlands	1·7	72·06	0·2	16·08
South West	1·5	22·89	0·7	3·99
West Midlands			5·6	3·38

Notes

The items included in the payments are section 7, regional selective assistance and new regional development grants under the Industrial Development Act 1984 and expenditure on land and factories in the assisted areas by the English Industrial Estates Corporation and the Welsh Development Agency.

The tables exclude payments of £147·1 million (£251·39 per head of the working population) to Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has a different range of financial incentives, but the figure has been restricted to aids similar to the main forms of regional aid available to Great Britain.

[3] All figures are gross and include payments to nationalised industries.

[4] It has not been possible to provide a breakdown by assisted area type for expenditure by the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Development Board for Rural Wales and expenditure on land and factories by the Scottish Development Agency; the expenditures concerned are £17·9, £0·5 and £32·4 million respectively.

[5] Information on the insured population is not available in terms of the current assisted areas map coverage. Therefore payments per head have been calculated using estimates of the working population for these areas.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what percentage of the total regional development grant received in the Merseyside special development area in each of the years 1981 to 1985, inclusive, was paid to firms investing *(a)* within the county of Merseyside and *(b)* within the city of Liverpool;

(2) what was the total payment of regional development grant to firms investing in the Merseyside special development area in each of the years 1981 to 1985, inclusive; and what were the comparable figures for those investing *(a)* within the county of Merseyside, and *(b)* within the city of Liverpool in each of those years.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986]: No special development areas (SDAs) have existed since the regional policy changes of November 1984. The following information relates to the Merseyside SDA as it was until that date and to payments of old-style regional development grants only. The figures quoted are the totals of individual payments of over £25,000, since payments below this size cannot be attributed to any unit smaller than a planning region. The information is as follows:

£'000

Calendar Year	Merseyside County	Merseyside SDA	Liverpool City
1981	85,812	73,517 (86)	925 (1)
1982	72,047	65,402 (91)	1,880 (3)
1983	58,459	57,028 (98)	1,584 (3)
1984	61,054	59,840 (98)	1,596 (3)
1985	38,000	37,597 (99)	737 (2)

Notes

(i) Merseyside county consists of the following travel-to-work areas: Birkenhead, Liverpool, Widnes, St. Helens and Southport.

(ii) The Merseyside SDA consists of the Birkenhead, Liverpool and Widnes travel-to-work areas.

(iii) Liverpool city consists of Everton and Toxteth employment office areas.

(iv) Figures in brackets represent the percentages of grant paid to establishments in the Merseyside SDA and Liverpool city within the totals for Merseyside county.

Merseyside Enterprise Board

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the working of the Merseyside Enterprise Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I cannot comment on the activities of the Merseyside Enterprise Board. It is an independent company which is not required to report its action to my Department.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make an official visit to the Merseyside Enterprise Board to discuss with its officials its rôle in the economic regeneration of the area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Although I shall be visiting Merseyside this week, I have no plans to visit the Merseyside Enterprise Board.

Crafts (Exhibition)

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to crafts to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Arrangements have been made for such an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall to take place from Monday 3 November to Friday 7 November 1986.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

House and Parliamentary Papers

Mr. Roger King asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement about the format of House and Parliamentary papers in the forthcoming Session.

Mr. Biffen: On 2 May 1984, the House approved the First Report of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) of Session 1983-84, entitled "House and Parliamentary Papers". The main recommendation of the report was that the process of transferring the House's papers to the larger, A4 format, which had begun with the *Official Report*, should be extended to other House papers.

In paragraph 15, the Committee informed the House that it was proposed that the change would be effective for the Vote bundle in October 1986. I am informed that Her Majesty's Stationery Office's programme for these changes is on target. Accordingly, at the beginning of the new Session, hon. Members will find that the Order Paper, the Notice Paper and all other papers included in the Vote bundle are being printed in the new format.

The change will also affect Bills and Acts, although until the end of 1986 some of these, if they are expected to receive Royal Assent before 31 December 1986, will for technical reasons continue to be produced in the old form. Other Sessional papers and delegated legislation will also convert to A4 at the beginning of the new Session.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Paul Fitzgerald Smyth

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what precautionary and other action has been taken by the education and library boards, and by the Northern Ireland Office, following the conviction of Paul Fitzgerald Smyth, of Lisnaskea, who had been recruited for the Irish Republican Army by a woman teacher at his school.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1986 c. 996]: A confidential letter has been received in the Department making allegations against a named teacher and investigations have been put in hand.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what has been the record of the restart programme in leading to participants *(a)* joining other training schemes, *(b)* becoming self-employed, *(c)* obtaining employment and *(d)* becoming involved in voluntary organisations.

Mr. Lee: Since restart became a national programme in July:

(a) 5,488 people have started training courses (other than the restart course).

(b) 1,585 people have taken the first steps to becoming self-employed through the enterprise allowance scheme.

(c) 12,304 people have started jobs or employment on the community programme.

(d) 1,054 people have joined the voluntary projects programme.

The figures given represent only those placings arising from referrals made at restart interviews. Seventy six per cent. of participants agree to pursue offers made at their interviews and some of these submissions are still in the process of being followed up. The placings also do not include the many people who later find jobs, or training, start self-employment or become involved with voluntary organisations wholly or partly as a result of advice given by counselling staff or on restart courses.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what percentage of those placed in jobs by the restart programme were eligible for the jobstart allowance; and what percentage of the budgeted cost of the jobstart allowance for the current financial year has been used.

Mr. Lee: By 11 September 1986, 10 per cent. of all people placed in employment by the restart programme were in receipt of the jobstart allowance. By 30 September 1986, 2 per cent. of the 1986-87 jobstart allowance budget had been used.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many people have been removed from the unemployment count over the last 12 months by special employment measures and YTS.

Mr. Lee: In September 1985 some 312,000 people were participating in the employment measures and it was then estimated that around 227,000 people were in jobs, training or early retirement instead of claiming benefit. At the end of September 1986, some 369,000 people were participating in the employment measures, with an estimated direct effect on unemployment of 285,000. YTS is a training measure and there are no estimates of its direct effect on unemployment. Since the nationwide introduction of restart from July 336,451 people have had a personal interview and of that number 30,218 have left the unemployment count.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what percentage of all people in work in 1979 were working part-time; and what was the percentage in each year since.

Mr. Lee: Within the regularly published employment series the estimates of the numbers of male employees in employment do not separately identify those in part-time employment. Estimates of the numbers of full-time and part-time male and female employees in employment are available from censuses of employment. For the dates specified, census of employment results are available only for September 1981, at which time 21 per cent. of employees in employment were part-time employees.

The labour force survey provides information on a different basis, but separately identifies part-time male and female employees and self-employed. The available estimates of the percentages of employees and self-employed in part-time employment are presented in the following table.

Labour force survey estimates[1] of employees and self-employed in part-time[2] employment
Great Britain

Year	*Per cent.*
1979	[3]17·9
1981	[3]19·7
1983	19·0
1984	20·9
1985	21·2

[1] Estimates relate to the spring of each year. Percentages for 1983, 1984 and 1985 exclude those on Government schemes, whereas 1979 and 1981 include those on schemes if reported as in employment.

[2] In this table a person has been included as in part-time employment if he considers his job to be a part-time job.

[3] Employees only, as in 1979 and 1981 the self-employed were not asked if they worked full or part-time.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the work force in hotels and catering are male and female; and of these how many are full-time and how many part-time.

Mr. Lee: Within the regularly published employment series the estimates of the numbers of male employees in employment do not separately identify those in full and part-time employment. The latest available estimates of all

male, all female and part-time female employees in employment in the hotels and catering industry in Great Britain are given in table 1.4 of the labour market data section in the October 1986 issue of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library.

YTS

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General if he will give a breakdown of the number on the YTS by skill being learnt; and if there is any intention of giving YTS trainees a contract.

Mr. Trippier: The most recent figures available giving a breakdown of the numbers of young people on YTS by skill being learned are for the period April to December 1985. The numbers of young people starting on 1 year YTS by occupational training family (OTF) in Great Britain are shown in the table.

Occupational Training Family	*Starters April-December 1985 (Male and Female, All YTS1 schemes)*
01 Admin, Clerical, Office	67,687
02 Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Fishing	16,417
03 Craft, Design	17,152
04 Installation, Maintenance, Repairs	52,208
05 Technical, Scientific	7,085
06 Manufacture, Assembly	54,081
07 Processing	1,951
08 Food Processing	15,319
09 Personal Services, Sales	68,505
10 Community and Health Service	15,694
11 Transport	6,668
98 Unclassified Starters	26,129
99 Unclassified Places	14,287
All Training Families	363,183

Figures for two-year YTS are not yet available.

Managing agents must issue to all YTS trainees a training agreement which gives information on their training programme and the terms and conditions which apply. Contracted status is not essential for that purpose but managing agents are free to give such status to their training agreements if they so wish.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General in which trades the youth training scheme has been integrated with apprenticeships.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that a full list of trades is not available. However, the main industries in which integration has been achieved are agriculture, building, electrical contracting, heating and ventilating, engineering, engineering maintenance, printing and road transport. It is estimated that in 1984 around half of all first year apprenticeships were brought within YTS.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what are the payments to trainees on the YTS agreed by the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Trippier: All trainees on the YTS scheme have employee status and are paid the full rate for the job by the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the extent of topping-up of the YTS allowance by employers.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that I am unable to offer reliable information. Payments made to YTS trainees in excess of the standard allowances to which they are entitled are a matter for the training providers concerned. Neither my Department nor the Manpower Services Commission receives comprehensive details of such payments.

Jobs Start

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what has been the total cost to date of the job start allowance; and what percentage of interviewees on the restart programme obtained a place in a job club.

Mr. Lee: By 30 September 1986 the total cost of the job start allowance was £208,532. By 11 September 1986, 1 per cent. of all interviewees from the restart programme had obtained a place in a job club. The percentage of interviewees obtaining job club places is expected to rise following the recent announcement to increase the number of job clubs to 1,000 by March 1987.

New Workers Scheme

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what is the cost per worker taken off the unemployment register of the new workers scheme.

Mr. Lee: As the new workers scheme is only six months old it is too early to provide an accurate costing. However, there is no reason to believe that the net cost per person removed from the unemployment count will be significantly higher than under the young workers scheme: £1,400 per person in 1985-86.

Wage Levels

Mr. Hicks asked the Paymaster General, for the last year for which figures are available, what was the level of average weekly earnings for males and females, respectively, in work in the United Kingdom, and the corresponding figures for Scotland, Wales, and each of the standard regions in England, and for Devon and Cornwall, separately; and if he will also express these figures as a percentage of the United Kingdom figure.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information on average weekly earnings is that for April 1985 and relates to full-time employees working a full week. The figures requested are as follows:

	Full-time males		Full-time females	
	Average gross weekly earnings	Percentage of average gross weekly earnings for United Kingdom	Average gross weekly earnings	Percentage of average gross weekly earnings for United Kingdom
	£	Per cent.	£	Per cent.
Region				
South East	213·8	111·4	140·9	111·6
East Anglia	182·7	95·2	118·6	93·9
South West	179·0	93·2	119·4	94·5
Cornwall	159·8	83·2	109·7	86·9
Devon	165·1	86·0	115·6	91·5
West Midlands	180·2	93·9	117·6	93·1
East Midlands	175·5	91·4	114·3	90·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	180·7	94·1	117·3	92·9
North West	185·2	96·5	121·0	95·8
North	179·3	93·4	119·7	94·8
Country				
England	193·3	100·7	127·6	101·0
Scotland	189·7	98·8	119·1	94·3
Wales	179·1	93·3	118·8	94·1
United Kingdom	192·0		126·3	

Source: New Earnings Survey (Great Britain) 1985.
New Earnings Survey (Northern Ireland) 1985.

Note: Differences in average earnings will reflect differences in the industrial and occupational structure of employment in different regions and do not necessarily imply differences in rates of pay for comparable jobs.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General what studies have been carried out into the impact of the enterprise allowance scheme on existing patterns of employment; and what were their conclusions.

Mr. Trippier: No studies have been carried out on the overall impact of the enterprise allowance scheme on existing patterns of employment. Information is, however, collected on the industrial classification of the businesses set up, business survival rates and the personal characteristics of the people joining the scheme. This and other survey information is summarised in articles in the August 1984, August 1985, and October 1986 issues of the *Employment Gazette*. Latest survey information shows that 76 per cent. of participants who completed a year on the scheme were still operating their business six months after the allowance ceased and that for every 100 of these businesses 37 new full-time and 54 part-time jobs had been created.

Stallite Batteries, Barnsley

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Paymaster General when the Employment Medical Advisory Service terminated the appointment of a Dr. Durie as an appointed factory doctor; and for what reason.

Mr. Trippier: Dr. Durie's appointment at the Stallite Batteries factory was terminated on 11 July 1985. Workers were absorbing high levels of lead and it was decided that their medical supervision should be carried out directly by the Health and Safety Executive's employment medical advisory service.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Paymaster General on what dates between January 1983 and December 1985 Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate visited Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, Barnsley, South Yorkshire; and what specific action was taken following each visit.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate carried out an inspection of Stallite Batteries Ltd. on 1 July 1983 and atmospheric sampling of lead in air was carried out by HSE's occupational hygienists on 17 August 1983. These visits resulted in written advice to the firm and the issue of two improvement notices.

Visits to check progress with the requirements of the improvement notices were made on 3 November 1983, 30 November 1983, 21 February 1984, 1 March 1984 and 23 July 1984.

A further inspection was carried out on 19 September 1984 following the installation of a substantial amount of new process machinery. A letter was subsequently sent to the firm and a progress visit was made on 9 January 1985 when atmospheric sampling was also carried out.

Following this a further improvement notice was issued and a letter sent to the firm. Follow-up visits were made on 4 July, 26 September, 23 October and 27 November 1985, to check on progress.

Another atmospheric survey was carried out on 18 December 1985 and the results were discussed with the firm in March 1986.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Paymaster General (1) on each occasion on which the appointed factory doctor took blood samples at Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, South Yorkshire, where male blood lead levels exceed 70 mg/100ml., what action the appointed factory doctor took;

(2) on each occasion on which the appointed factory doctor took blood samples at Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, where female blood lead levels exceed 40 mg/100ml., what action the appointed factory doctor took;

(3) on which dates during the period January 1983 to December 1985 blood samples were taken by an appointed factory doctor at Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, Barnsley, South Yorkshire;

(4) on each occasion when the appointed factory doctor took blood samples at Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, South Yorkshire, how many blood levels were found in the following categories: *(a)* males 0-19 mg/100ml., 20-39 mg/100ml., 40-59 mg/100ml., 60-69 mg/100ml. and 70+ mg/100ml., and *(b)* females 0-19 mg/100ml., 20-39 mg/100ml., 40-59 mg/100ml., 60-69 mg/100ml., 70-100 mg/100ml. and 100+ mg/100ml.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information is not available. Appointed doctors are asked to provide annual statistics of the results of blood tests and workers suspended from work with lead, but not details of individual tests, the results and action taken.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Paymaster General (1) what action the employment medical service took on each occasion on which it took blood samples at Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, when male blood lead levels exeeeded 70 mg/100 ml;

(2) what action the employment medical service took on each occasion on which it took blood samples at Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, South Yorkshire, when female blood levels exceeded 40 mg/100 ml.

Mr. Trippier: Providing the results were confirmed by a follow-up test, the employment medical adviser generally certified such workers as unfit for further exposure to lead. However, some older men, and some women regarded by the doctor as not of child-bearing capacity, would not be suspended. This is in accordance with the code of practice to the regulations. The numbers and the dates on which they were suspended are given in the table.

Workers at Stallite Batteries Certified as Unfit for Further Exposure to Lead

	Males	*Females*
20 August 1985	1	2
9 October 1985	—	2
8 November 1985	2	—
9 December 1985	—	1
23 December 1985	—	2
22 January 1986	2	—
27 February 1986	1	—
24 March 1986	1	—
4 April 1986	—	2
15 May 1986	2	1
16 June 1986	1	—
16 July 1986	—	1
15 September 1986	—	1
16 October 1986	—	1

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Paymaster General on which dates during the period January 1983 to December 1985 blood samples were taken by the employment medical advisory service at Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

Mr. Trippier: Blood tests were taken on the following dates:

16 January 1985
24 July 1985
15 August 1985
29 August 1985
24 September 1985
17 October 1985
31 October 1985
14 November 1985
28 November 1985
2 December 1985
19 December 1985

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Paymaster General, on each occasion when the employment medical advisory service took blood samples at Stallite Batteries, Worsborough Bridge, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, how many blood lead levels were found in the following categories *(a)* males 0-19 mg/100ml., 20-39 mg/100ml., 40-49 mg/100ml., 60-69 mg/100ml., and 70+ mg/100ml., and *(b)* females 0-19 mg/100ml., 20-39 mg/100ml., 40-59 mg/100ml., 60-69 mg/100ml., 70-100 mg/100ml., and 100+ mg/100ml.

Mr. Trippier: The following tables show the information requested. Workers with high blood lead levels will have blood samples taken more frequently. The numbers of results in the higher end of the range are thus more an indication of the frequency of sampling than of the number of workers with these levels.

Number of results in each category

(microgram per 100 millilitre).

Date of test	*0-19*	*20-39*	*40-49*	*60-69*	*70 or over*[1]
			Males		
16 January 1985	—	2	2	4	2
24 July 1985	1	3	2	3	4
15 August 1985	—	1	3	—	4
29 August 1985	—	—	—	—	3
24 September 1985	1	2	2	—	2
17 October 1985	—	—	1	—	—
31 October 1985	—	1	—	3	3
14 November 1985	—	—	—	—	1
28 November 1985	1	6	5	4	3
2 December 1985	—	—	—	—	1
19 December 1985	—	1	2	2	4
6 January 1986	—	—	2	4	3
13 January 1986	—	—	—	—	1
13 February 1986	—	1	3	4	6
6 March 1986	—	—	—	4	5
18 March 1986	—	—	—	—	1
10 April 1986	—	—	—	2	4
30 April 1986	—	—	4	2	8

Date of test	0-19	20-39	40-49	60-69	70 or over[1]
15 May 1986	1	2	1	3	6
28 May 1986	—	—	—	1	1
23 June 1986	—	2	6	3	3
2 July 1986	—	—	3	—	—
8 July 1986	—	—	1	—	—
10 July 1986	—	—	2	—	—
22 July 1986	1	3	1	2	2
11 August 1986	1	1	—	1	—
20 August 1986	4	2	3	1	1
September 1986	1	—	—	—	—
September 1986	2	1	—	1	—
30 September 1986	3	4	4	—	2
9 October 1986	—	2	4	2	—
16 October 1986	—	—	1	—	—
Total	16	34	52	46	70
			Females		
16 January 1985	—	—	3	—	—
24 July 1985	—	—	3	1	1
15 August 1985	—	—	—	—	2
29 August 1985	—	—	2	2	—
24 September 1985	2	—	2	2	—
31 October 1985	—	1	1	2	—
28 November 1985	—	2	1	1	—
19 December 1985	—	—	2	1	1
6 January 1986	3	—	1	—	—
13 February 1986	—	3	—	1	1
6 March 1986	—	—	1	—	—
18 March 1986	—	—	3	1	—
25 March 1986	—	—	2	1	—
10 April 1986	—	—	2	—	—
30 April 1986	—	2	2	1	1
15 May 1986	—	1	—	1	1
23 June 1986	—	1	3	1	—
2 July 1986	—	1	1	—	—
8 July 1986	—	—	1	—	—
10 July 1986	—	1	1	—	—
22 July 1986	—	2	—	—	—
4 August 1986	—	2	—	—	—
11 August 1986	—	3	—	—	—
15 August 1986	1	—	—	—	—
20 August 1986	4	1	—	—	—
September 1986	1	—	1	—	—
September 1986	—	1	1	1	—
30 September 1986	—	3	1	—	—
9 October 1986	—	2	3	1	—
Total	11	26	37	17	7

[1]None of the female levels were greater than 100.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will provide an update of statistics published in July in the *Official Report* concerning the destination of the long-term unemployed interviewed to date under the new restart programme.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1986, c. *939*]: The information requested is given in the table.

Numbers interviewed and placed for the period 12 May to 9 October

	Number
Interviewed	336,451
Placed in jobs	2,547
Placed on community programme	9,757
Placed in jobclubs	2,508
Placed on enterprise allowance scheme	1,585
Placed on training schemes	5,488
Placed on restart courses	31,012
Placed on the voluntary projects programme	1,054

The placings reflect only those arising from referrals made at the restart interview.

We know that 76 per cent. of participants agree to pursue the offer made to them at their interview and some of these submissions are still in the process of being followed up. The placings do not include the many people who find jobs, or other solutions to their unemployment, wholly or partly as a result of advice given by counselling staff or restart courses.

A recent survey conducted by the Manpower Services Commission showed that approximately 60 per cent. of people who had received restart interviews during the pilot programme and who subsequently left the unemployment register went into work and a further 8 per cent. into training.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Women Prisoners (Pregnancy)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women in custody in England experienced complications which necessitated transfer to a general hospital during pregnancy for each month during the current year.

Mr. Mellor: The information for each month of the current year is as follows:

Pregnant women experiencing complications necessitating transfer to a general hospital

	Number
January	6
February	2
March	2
April	4
May	6
June	2
July	2
August	1
September	4

Janice McKinley (Inquiry)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends publishing the report of the hospital inquiry which took place between 16 and 18 April into the death of Janice McKinley in the grounds of Scott clinic, Rainhill hospital, Merseyside.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The inquiry was established by the Mersey regional health authority. The question of publication of the inquiry team's report is a matter for that authority.

Criminal Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those convicted of criminal offences in *(a)* magistrates' courts and *(b)* other courts are employed, unemployed or self-employed.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not collected centrally.

BBC Scotland

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to change the British Broadcasting Corporation as it affects BBC Scotland.

Mr. Mellor: There are a number of recommendations contained in the report of the committee on financing the BBC which might affect the BBC's services, including those in Scotland. My right hon. Friend has said that he will reach decisions on these only in the light of public and parliamentary reaction.

Citizenship (South Africa)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of the Republic of South Africa have applied to enter Britain with the intention of seeking or re-enstating their British citizenship in the current year and 1985.

Mr. Waddington: No such figures are available since an intention to apply for or establish citizenship are not grounds for seeking entry to this country under the immigration rules.

Mr. John Stalker

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for changing the procedures for investigating senior police officers, following the reinstatement of Mr. John Stalker as deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have asked for observations from those principally concerned with the investigation of the allegations against Mr. Stalker. When I have received these I shall consider whether there are any lessons to be learnt for the investigation of future allegations against senior police officers and whether any amendment of the relevant regulations is desirable.

Visas

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if a person who is a national of India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh, who has permission to remain in the United Kingdom indefinitely, but wishes to obtain a visa exemption stamp, will be charged for such a stamp; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No fee is charged for the passport endorsement provided to confirm exemption from the visa requirement.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action a person with a visa to visit the United Kingdom is required to take if they wish to extend their visa; if representations from hon. Members will be considered in such a circumstance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: If a visa holder has a valid reason for not travelling to the United Kingdom before the visa expires the validity of the visa may be extended provided that there has been no change of material circumstances.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether children born to a British citizen, who can claim a right to enter the United Kingdom, and if refused entry, may remain in the United Kingdom pending their appeal against refusal, are able to travel to the United Kingdom, and to seek entry to the United Kingdom, notwithstanding the provisions of the "Statement of Change in Immigration Rules"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Citizens of a country who require visas to enter the United Kingdom may apply to a British mission for a British passport or for confirmation of their status if they consider that they are British citizens through birth to a British citizen.

Visitors (Detention)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors to Britain arriving at Heathrow or Gatwick from Bangladesh, India or Pakistan during the period of 1 to 14 October were detained in one of Her Majesty's prisons; what was the duration of

detention; what criteria his Department operates to decide which detainees were sent to prison and which went to hotels; how many are still at Erlestoke prison, Wiltshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The information readily available is as follows and relates to all nationals of the countries concerned, refers to those detained solely under powers conferred by the Immigration Act 1971, and excludes persons who may be detained as a result of a prosecution for Customs or other offences.

Seven passengers from the countries concerned who arrived between 1 and 14 October were detained in one of Her Majesty's prisons for between four and five days. Those detained in other prison service establishments at 20 October were as follows:

Blantyre House Detention Centre: 32
Erlestoke House Youth Custody Centre: 43

Thirty-six such nationals were still at Erlestoke House on 27 October.

The detainees who were sent to prison service establishments were those in whose cases the immigration service judged that the risk of absconding was unacceptably high. The action was taken because normal detention accommodation was full.

All those still detained are the subject of an automatic stop from Members of the House, whose representations we now await.

Queensland (Elections)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 22 October, what information he has about restrictions placed upon the right of British citizens to vote at elections in the state of Queensland and as to whether such restrictions apply in other Australian states.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1 August 1983 British citizens have been able to enrol as voters in Queensland elections only if they had already been on the Queensland, or any other Australian, electoral roll for three months preceding that date. The Australian Commonwealth and the other Australian states now also have similar rules.

TRANSPORT

Dalton-in-Furness Bypass

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announced the preferred route for the Dalton-in-Furness bypass on the A590.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Details of a preferred route for a bypass north of the town are published today.

Airmiss, Stanmore

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has to the circumstances in which two airliners were involved in a near miss over Stanmore, Middlesex, on 29 July and as to what action has been taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On 29 July two British Airways aircraft approaching Heathrow were involved in an airmiss whilst under radar control over north London. These were the subject of a routine airmiss report to the Civil Aviation Authority, which investigated the incident.

It has also been investigated by my Department's accidents investigation branch, whose report was published routinely last Friday after the normal detailed investigative and consultative procedures had been completed.

It is the Civil Aviation Authority which is responsible for air safety and, through the National Air Traffic Services, for civil air traffic control. I have spoken to the chairman of the CAA and I know he is concerned to ensure that incidents such as this do not recur. He will be considering urgently whether there is any further remedial action which needs to be taken.

Gatwick Airport

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the second terminal at Gatwick will be opened: what are the reasons for the delay in opening this terminal; and what steps are being taken to cope with the traffic at Gatwick in summer, 1987, as a result of the delay in bringing terminal 2 into operation.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986]: Gatwick Airport Ltd. is aiming to bring the new terminal into operation before Easter 1988.

The British Airports Authority's external financing limit of £15 million for 1986-87 was decided in September 1985. It took account of the authority's forecasts of its capital requirements and internal resources, and was thought sufficient to allow the authority to complete Gatwick north terminal in summer 1987, and make good progress on other major projects. The authority subsequently reduced its forecasts of internal resources and as a result decided to delay the opening of the Gatwick north terminal. It is for the authority to order its investment priorities. The BAA informs me that a number of minor changes to the allocation of space and facilities will be made to help deal with the increased traffic expected next year.

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactive Discharges

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a list showing, for each licensed nuclear power station site *(a)* the calculated critical group exposures associated with actual radioactive discharges in the last year and *(b)* the proportion that actual radioactive discharges in the last year bear to maximum authorised limits, where such authorisations contain numerical limits; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a list showing the estimated critical group exposures associated with 100 per cent. of authorised radioactive discharges at each licensed nuclear power station site, where such authorisations contain numerical limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Crime Prevention Grants

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to make additional funds available to local authorities where they embark on schemes to make crime prevention grants available to

residents in their area; whether expenditure on such grants will be excluded from penalty consideration and rate limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The Government are already providing support for a number of such schemes through the urban programme and the community programme. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has asked the working group on residential burglary to review the question of security grants and will be considering its report in due course.

Local authority expenditure on crime prevention grants is subject to normal block grant rules and would be taken into account as appropriate in setting any rate limits.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to amend the Mobile Homes Act 1983 in the light of the representations made to by him by mobile home owners and others.

Mr. Tracey: No. We are satisfied that the Mobile Homes Act 1983 is, in general, working well. We know that problems have arisen for some residents over the practical operation of the Act and the Department's officials are discussing with representatives of residents and site owners how the Act can be made to work more effectively.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proportion of informal planning appeals were decided in favour of the applicant in each of the past five years;

(2) what proportion of full planning appeals were decided in favour of the applicant in each of the past five years;

(3) what proportion of written planning appeals were decided in favour of the applicant in each of the past five years.

Mr. Tracey: The proportion of planning appeals under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 decided in favour of the appellant in each of the last five years was as follows:

Year	*Written Representations Per cent.*	*Public Inquiries Per cent.*	*Informal Hearings*[1] *Per cent.*
1981	30·9	39·8	—
1982	29·1	38·2	—
1983	30·8	38·4	41·1
1984	31·0	40·6	35·1
1985	35·7	48·9	42·1

[1] figures available only from July 1983

Development Commission (Budget)

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for the last year for which figures are available, the total budget of the Development Commission, the amount spent in Devon and Cornwall, and the equivalent figures per head of the insured population for these two areas covered by the commission's activities.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Development Commission's approved estimate for 1986-87 is £25·9 million. A county by county breakdown of this figure is not available. As an indication of the extent of the commission's activity in Devon and Cornwall, last year 65 redundant building grants were awarded in the two counties (equivalent to 20 per cent. of the Development Commission's total); and 64,000 square feet of factory space was constructed on the Commission's behalf (equivalent to 14 per cent. of the total).

Merseyside Enterprise Board

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will pay a visit to the Merseyside enterprise board to discuss with its officials its role in providing new jobs on Merseyside;

(2) if he will pay a visit to the Merseyside enterprise board to discuss with its officials its efforts to re-generate inner city areas on Merseyside.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to visit the Merseyside Enterprise Board.

Planning Applications

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions during 1986 his Department has issued directions under article 10 of the General Development Order preventing a local authority from determining a planning application; and in how many of those cases the direction has been followed by a call-in and a subsequent public inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: To date in 1986 the Department has issued 88 directions under article 10 of the General Development Order 1977; 34 applications have subsequently been called in and four have so far been to public inquiry.

Portsmouth (Housing)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the content of the telephone call between his Department and an officer of Portsmouth city council concerning the Portsdown Park housing estate on 3 March;

(2) why the Minister responsible for making the decision with regard to Portsmouth city council's proposal to refurbish the Portsdown Park estate made contact with members of the Conservative group on Portsmouth city council and officers of the council on 3 March with regard to the city's proposed refurbishment of the Portsdown Park estate; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what correspondence passed between the Department and Portsmouth city council about

Portsdown Park other than the decision letter dated 4 March; what telephone conversations took place on 3, 4, and 6 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to the replies*, 23 October 1986 and 27 October 1986]: There is no record of contact between my officials and officers of the city council on Monday 3 March. On Tuesday 4 March, as a matter of courtesy I telephoned the leader of the council, and my officials telephoned council officers, to say that the Secretary of State's response to the council's application was to be sent by letter that day, and to indicate what the response would be. On 6 March officials were again in touch about a meeting to discuss the implications of the Department's letter of 4 March.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available copies of all the correspondence and details of any other contacts between his Department and Portsmouth city council with regard to the city's plan to refurbish the Portsdown Park estate which took place between the original submission of the Barratt's bid and the final decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to the reply*, 23 October 1986, c. *925-26*]: I am arranging for copies of the main correspondence between my Department and the city council to be sent to the hon. Member. In addition to the correspondence, there have been two meetings between officials, and numerous telephone conversations to discuss the details of the council's application.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice Portsmouth city council was given by his Department on ways to refurbish Portsmouth Park which would not require Government approval.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to the reply*, 27 October 1986]: In discussions between officers of the city council and officials of my Department the possibility of alternative approaches was raised, but not with a view to avoiding the need for Government approval.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why the Minister dealing with Portsmouth's application to refurbish the Portsdown Park estate advised that he could be surcharged or challenged in other ways if he approved Portsmouth's application.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to the reply*, 27 October 1986]: Any decision by the Secretary of State on an application for consent to disposal which was taken on the basis of inadequate information could be open to challenge in the courts. The Department's letter of 4 March indicated that the city council had not provided all the information needed to enable the Secretary of State to make a full assessment of its plans for the disposal of Portsdown Park. The information has since been supplied.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lyminge Forest

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria have been considered by the Forestry Commission in reaching a decision on the proposed sale of West wood, Lyminge forest, Kent to a Dutch company represented by Center Parcs Limited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Forestry Commission decided to make West wood, Lyminge, Kent, available for sale on the open market, subject to outline planning permission for leisure development being granted by the local authority. In reaching this decision, the commission took account of ministerial guidelines for the selection of assets to be sold, which are reproduced in appendix V of its 1981-82 annual report; it also took account of the employment creation potential of such a development. There was no commitment to sell to Center Parcs Limited.

Healthy Foodstuffs

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what actions he has taken to increase and make more available the supply of healthy foodstuffs.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A major element of the Government's food and nutrition policy is maintaining an adequate supply of a wide variety of wholesome food in the United Kingdom at prices people can afford.

There is also comprehensive legislation regulating the safety, quality and labelling of food.

Fishing Fleet (Decommissioning Scheme)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what gross tonnage has left the fishing fleets in England, Wales and Scotland as a result of the decommissioning scheme.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986]: Since the decommissioning grant scheme came into operation in late December 1983, 42,864 GRT has been withdrawn from the fishing fleets of England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the owners who received money to decommission fishing vessels have subsequently purchased replacement fishing vessels.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986]: Information in the form requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels have been decommissioned in England, Wales and Scotland since the decommissioning scheme was introduced.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986]: Since the decommissioning grant scheme came into operation, 206 vessels have been decommissioned in England, Wales and Scotland.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Overseas Civil Service

4. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to permit retired members of the Overseas Civil Service to count war service before appointment towards their pension entitlement on the same terms as apply to other retired members of the public service; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am aware how strongly Colonial Service pensioners feel about this issue. It is kept under

careful review. There are, however, many claims on public expenditure resources. So far, we have not been able to accommodate this extra commitment.

Turks and Caicos Islands

17. **Mr. Garrett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken over the past three months in relation to the problems in the Turks and Caicos Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There is little I can add to the statement that I made to the House on 25 July. The constitutional commission under Sir Roy Marshall is expected to conclude its review by the end of the year.

A separate commission of inquiry under Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper was appointed by the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands on 24 September to investigate allegations about irregularities in the transfer of Crown land in 1983. Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper has already begun his investigations.

Contadora Peace Process

19. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the implications for the Contadora peace process of the funding of the Contras by the United States Government.

Mr. Eggar: We have received numerous letters from right hon. and hon. Members, individuals and organisations on the subject of US funding of the Contras. In reply, we have made clear that we support the Contadora peace process; that we do not believe that the problems of central America can be resolved by armed force; and that we ensure that the United States Government are aware of our views.

South Africa

20. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of his policies designed to bring about an end to apartheid in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Government policy is to promote the total abolition of apartheid. During my presidency mission to Southern Africa I argued the case for fundamental but peaceful change, and for genuine dialogue between the South African Government and freely chosen leaders of the black community. Prime responsibility for instituting change and for creating conditions in which dialogue can take place lies with the South African Government.

24. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many economic measures have been taken against South Africa by the European Economic Community; and what assessment he has made of their effectiveness.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The twelve member states of the European Community have taken a range of economic measures—some positive, some restrictive—designed to impress on the South African Government the urgent need for fundamental but peaceful change. We are disappointed that the South African Government have so far failed to take the steps towards genuine national dialogue which have been urged on them by the Twelve, but they can be in no doubt of the Twelve's determination to see an end to apartheid.

25. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Anglo-South African relations.

36. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with South Africa.

47. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's current relations with South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our relations with South Africa are overshadowed by the issue of apartheid. We continue to seek an early end to apartheid in South Africa and its peaceful replacement by a non-racial, representative system of government.

28. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has recently met representatives of the Inkatha Movement from South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I had talks with Chief Buthelezi when I visited South Africa in July.

30. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans to visit South Africa again during his presidency of the European Economic Community Council.

45. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit the Republic of South Africa.

74. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to visit South Africa again during his term as President of the European Economic Community Council.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans for such a visit.

34. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he has had with representatives of Commonwealth and European Community countries to discuss South Africa since the beginning of the summer Adjournment.

Mrs. Chalker: There have been a number of such meetings, notably the Commonwealth Heads of Government review meeting on 3 to 5 August and meetings of Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 15 to 16 September and 27 October.

35. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Economic Community Council will next consider the effectiveness of its economic measures against South Africa since he became President of the Council.

50. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions he plans with his European Economic Community colleagues about European Economic Community policy towards South Africa.

53. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European

Economic Community Council will next discuss collective European Economic Community action against South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Foreign Ministers of the Twelve discussed South Africa in Political Co-operation on 15 to 16 September and again on 27 October. They will continue to pay close attention to the issue.

37. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent actions Her Majesty's Government have taken on the situation in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to work for progress towards the establishment in South Africa of a non-racial, representative system of government. We recently underlined our deep concern at the situation in South Africa, including the state of emergency and the large number of detentions without charge by adopting, together with our partners in the Twelve, a further package of measures designed to impress upon the South African Government the urgent need for fundamental change.

38. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action is to be taken by the European Economic Community Council following his visit to South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Foreign Ministers agreed in European political co-operation on 15 to 16 September on a number of measures—some positive, some restrictive—designed to impress on the South African Government the urgent need for fundamental but peaceful change through dialogue.

40. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in South Africa.

62. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in South Africa.

69. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent events in southern Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Against a background of continuing tension and the state of emergency we remain deeply concerned at the situation inside South Africa. We regret that it seems that no significant progress has been made towards the national dialogue that is so urgently needed.

43. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of his latest visit to South Africa in his capacity as President of the European Economic Community Council.

Mrs. Chalker: During his visit my right hon. and learned Friend was able to get across to the many people he met, including members of the South African Government, the grave concern felt by all the Twelve about the situation in South Africa.

54. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what use is he making of his presidency of the European Economic Community Council to work towards the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We, together with our partners in the Twelve, have been working actively to promote peaceful change towards a non-racial representative system of government in South Africa. The visits to southern Africa by my right hon. and learned Friend in July were part of that effort.

55. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what impact has been made on South African apartheid by European Economic Community policies implemented during his presidency.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We are disappointed that the South African Government have so far failed to take the steps towards genuine national dialogue called for by the Twelve. The measures which the Twelve themselves have taken can have left the South Africans in no doubt of our collective determination to see an end to apartheid.

57. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measure of agreement exists among European Economic Community members about economic action against South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

58. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what economic measures have so far been taken against South Africa by the European Economic Community during his presidency; what consideration has been given to restrictions on imports of coal from South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Foreign Ministers of the Twelve agreed on 15-16 September to adopt a package of measures—some restrictive, some positive—on the lines envisaged by the European Council in June at the Hague. Most partners would also have been willing to include a ban on the import of coal. The presidency is continuing to seek consensus on this question.

60. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in working with other countries to secure the abolition of apartheid in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We are deeply disappointed that the South African Government have so far failed to take the necessary steps towards national dialogue which we have urged upon them, together with our European and Commonwealth partners. However, they can be in no doubt of our determination to see an early end to apartheid.

71. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Economic Community Council will next consider measures to end apartheid in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Foreign Ministers of the Twelve discussed South Africa in Political co-operation on 15-16 September and again on 27 October. They will continue to pay close attention to the problem. They announced on 16 September a package of further measures including bans on new investment and on the import of iron, steel and gold coins as well as a strengthening of the Twelve's aid programmes to black South Africans and to neighbouring states.

73. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he will take, as President of the European Economic Community Council, to secure an end to apartheid in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Foreign Ministers of the Twelve discussed South Africa in political co-operation on 15/16 September and again on 27 October. They announced on 16 September a package of further measures including bans on new investment and on the import of iron, steel and gold coins as well as a strengthening of the Twelve's aid programmes to black South Africans and to neighbouring states. Together with our European partners we shall continue to work actively for an end to apartheid.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of the practice of apartheid in Bophuthatswana.

Mrs. Chalker: The existence of Bophuthatswana is an expression of the practice of apartheid in South Africa as a whole.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of the financial dependence of Bophuthatswana on the Government of South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: According to estimated figures published by the South African Institute for Race Relations the South African Government provided grants and loans worth R362 million to Bophuthatswana in 1983-84, which should be compared with budgeted spending by Bophuthatswana of R731 million. The Bophuthatswana economy is dependent on the wider South African economy in other ways too: in particular wages of commuters and migrants working in the rest of South Africa account for a high proportion of the income of residents in Bophuthatswana.

Soviet Union

21. **Mr. Temple-Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to visit Moscow to meet his Soviet counterpart.

65. **Mr. George Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects next to visit Moscow.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has accepted Mr. Shevardnadze's invitation to visit Moscow in 1987. Dates will be agreed later.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

East-West Relations

22. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on East-West relations.

Mr. Renton: We welcome the substantial progress made at Reykjavik towards agreement on nuclear arms reductions and hope both sides will build on this in the negotiations in Geneva. The Government will continue to play a leading role in the search for balanced and verifiable agreements on nuclear, chemical and conventional arms. At the Vienna CSCE meeting, which starts in November, we will press for greater respect for human rights.

Mr. Nelson Mandela

23. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further measures he plans to take to achieve the release of Nelson Mandela.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: With our Commonwealth and European partners we have repeatedly called on the South African Government to release unconditionally Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. We shall continue to do so, for Mr. Mandela's release would be a key step towards creating conditions in which genuine dialogue can begin in South Africa.

Palestinians

26. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken during his presidency of the Council of Ministers to progress the principles outlined in the Venice declaration with regard to the exercise of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Renton: We continue to keep in close touch with the parties and to urge negotiation of a settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute in accordance with the principles of the Venice declaration.

Chile

27. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European counterparts on the political and military situation in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend had detailed discussions about Chile with his EC colleagues last month, in the framework of European political co-operation. On 16 September the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve issued a statement calling on the Chilean Government to lift immediately the state of siege and to accelerate the process of restoring democracy.

32. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made regarding the human rights cases on which Her Majesty's Government has made representations to the Government of Chile.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 21 October at column *844*. We continue to make representations to the Chilean authorities about other human rights cases, including those of Sr. Fernandez Lembach, Sr. Rojas, Srta. Quintana and Mr. Beausire.

Disarmament

29. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress and the current positions at the various disarmament conferences.

Mr. Renton: The Reykjavik meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev on 11-12 October concentrated mainly on the issues at the Geneva nuclear and space talks. The meeting was of value because both sides came so close to agreement. We warmly welcome this, particularly the extent of agreement that proved possible on the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear weapons, and on nuclear testing. However, we regret the Soviet insistence in Reykjavik, in making agreement on all issues including on INF, dependent on their demands on SDI. The meeting was only one step in the long search towards the goal of balanced and verifiable agreements on arms control.

The proposals remain on the table. We are encouraged by the apparent determination on both sides to build on the progress already made. Together with the United States and our allies we will seek to maintain the momentum that has been generated at Reykjavik.

The Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe in which the United Kingdom played a leading role, concluded satisfactorily on 22 September with agreement, the first in the arms control field since 1979, on a set of measures designed to build confidence and reduce mistrust through increased openness about military activities in Europe.

The 40th round of the mutual and balanced force reduction talks opened in Vienna on 25 September. The west continues to press for a serious eastern response to the innovative western proposal of December 1985.

On chemical weapons the aim remains a complete ban. we hope the British initiative on verification will enable progress towards this end.

51. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Foreign Secretary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in relation to possible British involvement in the planned Geneva talks on disarmament.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister and my right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, both had meetings on 14 October with Mr. Karpov, the chief Soviet negotiator at the Geneva nuclear and space talks. The question of British involvement in those negotiations does not arise. Mr. Gorbachev stated at his press conference in Reykjavik on 12 October that he had agreed with President Reagan that British and French nuclear forces should be completely left out of their bilateral negotiations. He added that these forces should remain independent and could be further increased and improved.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column 412, what plans he has to submit to the committee on disarmament a revised and updated version of Her Majesty's Government's CD 610 Paper of July 1985 on verification.

Mr. Renton: We have no plans to do so at present. The need for a further United Kingdom paper is kept under review in the light of comments made by others at Geneva.

European Community Structures

31. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the reform of the European Economic Community structures since the summer Adjournment.

Mrs. Chalker: (I) The Council has established a draft budget for 1987 which respects the guideline for agricultural spending.

(II) The co-responsibility levy designed to curb cereals production which we agreed at this year's agricultural price fixing has come into force. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has put forward proposals for a Community scheme to divert land out of cereals production so helping to eliminate costly surpluses and reducing costs of the regime.

(III) Proposals for reform of the beef regime and for further reform of the milk regime are under discussion in the Agriculture Council.(IV) The Commission has in the meantime announced management measures in the milk sector which are equivalent to an annual price reduction of about 1 per cent.

(V) Ministers of the GATT participating countries agreed that all aspects of agricultural support should be included in the new GATT round negotiations, which were launched in Uruguay on 15-20 September.

(VI) Finance Ministers of the Community, meeting on 13 October under the chairmanship of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave support to the principles that CAP support prices should more closely reflect market conditions (especially where there are surpluses) and that intervention should revert to its original role of safety net.

Drugs Liaison Officers

33. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the drugs liaison officers in New Delhi and Bombay to take up their posts.

Mr. Eggar: We have pressed the Government of India to give the formal authorisation necessary to enable the drugs liaison officers to take up their posts. We expect a final desion from the Indian authorities very shortly.

Nicaragua

39. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning Her Majesty's Government's relations with Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: We want to see a genuinely democratic Nicaragua living in peace with her neighbours. Our future relations will depend on Nicaragua ending the arms build-up and subversion which alarms its neighbours, and making progress towards democracy.

46. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to seek to visit Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit Nicaragua.

49. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: During recent months harassment of the Opposition and other dissenting opinion has increased following the tightening of the state of emergency in June. We regret the closure of the only independent newspaper, *La Prensa*, and the expulsion of two church leaders from Nicaragua. These actions appear to be in direct conflict with some of the basic objectives of Contadora.

Mr. George Shultz

41. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Mr. George Shultz, the United States Secretary of State; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I last met Mr. Shultz on 24 September at the United Nations General Assembly. We are in regular contact on a wide range of issues.

Central America

42. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to pay an official visit to any of the Central American states.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend's next visit to the area will be to Mexico in early January 1987.

76. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place recently in the Council of Ministers on the situation in central America.

Mr. Eggar: Within the framework of European Political Cooperation there is regular discussion at appropriate levels of all important issues, including central America. Foreign Ministers recently discussed details of the next meeting of European Community, central America and Contadora Foreign Ministers due to be held in 1987 in Guatemala.

European Community (Foreign Policy)

44. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a common European Community foreign policy.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 9 July 1986 at column *208*.

Falkland Islands

48. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no current plans to visit the Falkland Islands.

Latin America

52. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made to the United Kingdom diplomatic representation in Latin America over the past six months.

Mr. Eggar: Consular relations with Guatemala were resumed on 19 August 1986.

EC (Co-operation)

56. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on political co-operation within the European Community since Spanish accession.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the accession of Spain and Portugal on 1 January 1986, new treaty provisions in European political co-operation (forming title III of the Single European Act) have been concluded, and the Twelve have intensified their co-operation. For example, they have taken a firm stand against Libyan State supported terrorism, have issued major statements and taken measures against South Africa; and we have worked closely together in the Helsinki process including the recently concluded Stockholm CDE talks. Both Spain and Portugal have played a valuable role in the work of European political co-operation.

Middle East

59. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

64. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he estimates the present prospects of the peacemaking process between Israel and her neighbours.

Mr. Renton: We welcome recent meetings between Israeli and Arab leaders in Morocco and Egypt but regret that there has not been more progress towards a comprehensive peace through negotiation.

Test Ban Treaty

61. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent developments there have been regarding the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

63. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the latest developments in negotiating a nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Renton: We welcome the meetings of United States and Soviet experts to discuss nuclear testing issues. As the hon. Member will be aware one of the principal subjects for discussion at these meetings has been the question of verification associated with the ratification of the threshold test ban and peaceful nuclear explosion treaties. This underlines the importance of verification issues in seeking ways forward on nuclear testing constraints. The search for progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty remains part of our overall arms control policy.

We also very much welcome the ideas put forward by President Reagan in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 22 September. The practical, step by step, approach implicit in President Reagan's statement is fully consistent with the views of the authorised Government. Accordingly we also welcome the apparant agreement at the Reykjavik summit by the Soviet Union to this sort of approach.

Romania

66. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made about human rights in Romania.

Mr. Renton: We lose no opportunity to raise humanitarian issues with the Romanian leadership, who can be in no doubt about British views. My right hon. and learned Friend visited Bucharest in February 1985, and I went to Romania in May of this year when these issues were raised. We are expecting a visit by the Romanian Deputy Foreign Minister later this year.

South Atlantic (Fishing Regime)

67. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards an agreement on a fishing regime in the south Atlantic.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the statement that my right hon. and learned Friend made earlier today.

Cyprus

68. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present position in Cyprus.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations Secretary General is continuing his efforts with the parties to find a peaceful, just and lasting settlement in Cyprus. We strongly support his initiative, which we believe offers by far the best prospect of achieving such a settlement. We continue to urge all the parties to co-operate with him, and to refrain from any action which might make his task more difficult.

72. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to seek to ensure that a solution can be reached to the problem of Cyprus, including the withdrawal of Turkish military forces from that country.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations Secretary General continues in his efforts to bring the two sides together. We strongly support his initiative and are ready to do whatever we can to help. Withdrawal of foreign troops from the Republic of Cyprus will have to form part of a comprehensive settlement.

State Terrorism

70. **Dr. M. S. Miller** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in his discussions with his European Economic Community counterparts towards an effective concerted policy to combat state terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: An unprecedented range of measures to prevent further acts of Libyan state directed terrorism and to defend ourselves against such threats were, as my right hon. and learned Friend told the House on 23 April, agreed on 21 April by the Twelve. We continue to work within European political co-operation and the Trevi group to ensure effective co-operation amongst the Twelve. On 4 October, the Twelve issued a joint statement endorsing the firm action taken by us with regard to Libyan Arab Airlines.

Anglo-Austrian Relations

75. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Austrian relations.

Mr. Eggar: Relations between the United Kingdom and Austria are good. Vice-Chancellor Norbert Steger visited Britain as the guest of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry from 26 February to 1 March this year. Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Vienna from 14 to 16 April in connection with the Britain in Vienna Festival. Dr. Peter Jankowitsch, Austrian Foreign Minister, called on my right hon. and learned Friend in London on 30 June.

Hong Kong

77. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the last meeting of the Sino-British joint liaison group on Hong Kong was held; what matters were discussed; and where and when he next expects the group to meet.

Mr. Renton: The fourth meeting of the Sino-British joint liaison group took place in London from 22 to 25 July. Proceedings of the group are confidential, but further good progress was made. Copies of the communiqué released following the meeting have been placed in the Library of the House. The next meeting of the group will take place in Peking from 25 to 28 November.

US Nuclear Weapons

78. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he was consulted by his United States counterparts about the implications for arms control verification and confidence-building measures of allowing storage of United States air force nuclear weapons in underground vaults in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: Weapons of the type referred to are not the subject of any current arms control negotiations. The question of verification or confidence building measures does not therefore arise. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence, is involved in continuing contacts with the United States Government on all aspects of possible storage facilities.

Guatemala

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress towards re-establishing diplomatic relations with Guatemala.

Mr. Eggar: Consular relations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala were re-established on 19 August 1986. The joint communiqué announcing this step expressed our hope and that of the Guatemalan Government that diplomatic relations would be re-established by the end of the year.

Visas (Soviet Union)

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to raise the cases of individuals in the Soviet Union who have been refused exit visas.

Mr. Renton: Ministers raise human rights issues and individual cases with the Soviet authorities at every suitable opportunity. The cases of a number of prominent "refuseniks" including Ida Nudel, Alexsei Magarik and Yuli Edelstein were raised with Mr. Shevardnadze during his visit here in July when he met both the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend. We will continue to press the Soviet authorities to fulfil their international obligations in the field of human rights, including at the next CSCE meeting which opens in Vienna on 4 November.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Soviet Union has yet responded to the proposals of the United States of

America on verifying the yield of nuclear tests with a view to the United States of America ratifying the threshold test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) earlier today.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the international forums since January 1979 at which Her Majesty's Government have been attempting to achieve progress on the problem of resolving verification issues relative to a comprehensive nuclear test ban; and if he will place in the Library a copy of Her Majesty's Government's proposals to the conference of disarmament for an appropriate mandate for an ad hoc committee to discuss the issue of adequately verifying a comprehensive nuclear test ban.

Mr. Renton: The appropriate forum in which to seek to resolve verification issues relative to a comprehensive nuclear test ban is the conference on disarmament and the bodies which the conference decides to establish. We have participated in the work of the ad hoc group of scientific experts since its inception and we have sought an appropriate mandate for an ad hoc committee to conduct a substantive examination of issues relevant to a comprehensive test ban with a view to the negotiation of a treaty. The United Kingdom's proposals for these mandates are contained in CD521, a copy of which (together with all other CD documents) is available in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals were agreed to by the Soviet Union in Reykjavik in relation to *(a)* a freeze on short-range INF missiles as part of a zero option agreement on INF in Europe, *(b)* the deployment of a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation matching force of sort-range INF missiles and *(c)* an immediate start to negotiations on reductions in short-range INF weapons.

Mr. Renton: The Alliance position is that any agreement on longer range INF should include appropriate constraints on Soviet shorter range intermediate nuclear forces (SRINF).

As the United States Government have made clear, the two sides discussed at Reykjavik a freeze on SRINF in Europe at the level of current Soviet deployments pending the negotiation of reductions. They also agreed that the negotiations on the reduction of SRINF should begin within 6 months of the conclusion of an INF agreement. Precise details were not worked out. The right to equal global ceilings for both the United States and Soviet Union has been a consistent element in the Alliance position in the INF negotiations. This remains the case.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the extent to which any agreement between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to abolish all nuclear ballistic missiles should be made dependent upon reducing the levels of chemical and conventional arms.

Mr. Renton: We hope to see arms control agreements covering the full range of weapons systems, chemical and conventional as well as nuclear. The deeper the cuts in the ballistic missile forces of the United States and the Soviet Union, the more important it becomes to achieve a more stable balance in conventional forces in Europe and an effective and adequately verified ban on chemical weapons.

Visas

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the maximum period of stay a person applying for a visa to visit the United Kindom may be granted, apart from those applying for a multiple visit visa on the basis they require to visit regularly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A single entry visit visa is normally made valid for presentation at a United Kingdom port for six months from the date of issue.

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place between his Deparment and ICI about the commercial development of DNA testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I am following the commercial development of DNA testing with keen interest and have met with representatives of ICI, as have FCO officials. I am confident that DNA testing can help speedily resolve applications to settle in this country which depend mainly on proving a family relationship.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date he issued a circular to local offices safeguarding the rights of claimants to the long-term rate of supplementary benefit on moving from Northern Ireland to the mainland.

Mr. Lyell: Circular S22/86, a copy of which is in the Library, was distributed to local offices on 17 September 1986.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each social services authority area the number of people in receipt of benefit under the Supplementary Benefit (Requirments) Regulations 1983, regulation 9 in residential care for the elderly.

Mr. Lyell: Information on the numbers of people in receipt of supplementary benefit is not available by social services authority areas. Information on the number of claimants in residential care homes for the elderly during the period April to July 1985, drawn from special returns by local offices, is available according to social security region in a Department of Health and Social Security document "Supplementary Benefit Board and Lodging Allowances, Results of a Special Statistical Exercise (29 April—29 July 1985)", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of people in *(a)* Glasgow

and *(b)* Glasgow Central currently awaiting an appeal to a supplementary benefits tribunal; and what was the corresponding figure two years previously;

(2) what is the current waiting time for the result of an adjudication from a supplementary benefits tribunal in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow Central.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of people in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow and *(b)* Strathclyde currently awaiting an appeal to a supplementary benefits tribunal; and what was the corresponding figure two years previously;

(2) what is the current waiting time for the result of an adjudication from a supplementary benefits tribunal to *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Members to the replies which I gave to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) on 23 October at column *981*.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Greenock and Port Glasgow are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit; and how many are pensioners, heads of one-parent families or unemployed.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from the Department's offices in Greenock and Port Glasgow on 13 August 1986, the latest available figures, were as follows:

	Number
Unemployed	7,116
Over pension age	4,898
Others (including one-parent families)	4,925
Total	16,939

Source: 100 per cent of cases in action.

Appeals Tribunals

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if in the circumstances when claimants win an appeal tribunal and the Secretary of State wishes to overrule it by going to appeal, claimants are automatically notified of his decision in writing.

Mr. Lyell: Yes. Where the Secretary of State or the adjudication officer wishes to appeal against the decision of a social security tribunal or a medical appeal tribunal the claimant is advised in writing that an appeal to the commissioner is to be made or, where appropriate, that leave to appeal to the commissioner is being sought from the tribunal chairman. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind perhaps he would let me have details.

Health Funding

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations concerning underfunding in *(a)* the South-East Thames region and *(b)* Bexley health district.

Mr. Newton: Over the past year we have received representation about the funding of the Bexley health authority from my hon. Friend himself, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) and the Bexley community health council. Some representations have also been made about funding in other parts of the South East Thames regional health authority.

Cancer (West Cumbria)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received the studies implementing recommendations 2 and 3 of the report of the group chaired by Sir Douglas Black on the incidence of cancer in West Cumbria; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The findings of the studies, proposed in recommendations 2 and 3 of the report of the group chaired by Sir Douglas Black on the incidence of cancer in West Cumbria, have not yet been received.

Local Office (Bloomsbury)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state, on a daily basis for the last 12 months, in relation to the Bloomsbury office of his Department, Tavistock Square *(a)* the opening hours of the office, *(b)* the number of persons attending the office, *(c)* the average waiting time for those persons and *(d)* the numbers of persons interviewed, at reception or elsewhere in the office.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Nurse's Cottage, Aylesbury

Mr. Raison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the nurse's cottage, Wendore Road, Butler's Cross, in Aylesbury to be sold by the Wycombe health authority.

Mrs. Currie: We have consulted the regional health authority, whose responsibility it is, and I understand that the property will be placed on the market in the immediate future.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions have been held with voluntary organisations representing families of people suffering from mental disorder regarding their involvement in decisions on care and the planning of relevant services.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him by my predecessor on 30 June 1986 at column *414*. I should only wish to add that in addition to the 19 mental illness organisations that we support, we also fund 23 mental handicap organisations and are in contact with others we do not fund.

Sugars

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce the membership of the COMA sub-panel set up to examine the effects of sugars in the diet.

Mrs. Currie: We expect the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food Policy to decide on the chairman and membership of its panel on sugars in the diet at its next meeting on 19 December.

Electoral Statistics

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the 20 English non-metropolitan counties which have shown the greatest percentage of growth in electorate since 1981; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the following table:

Non-metropolitan county (ranked by percentage growth)	*Electorate*		*1981-86 growth*	
	1981 register	*1986 register*	*Increase in electorate*	*Percentage increase*
Buckinghamshire	410,448	451,984	41,536	10·1
Cambridgeshire	427,090	464,302	37,212	8·7
Berkshire	499,355	541,110	41,755	8·4
Dorset	468,256	505,904	37,648	8·0
Northamptonshire	386,691	417,648	30,957	8·0
Wiltshire	382,304	410,378	28,074	7·3
Somerset	322,743	346,357	23,614	7·3
Shropshire	276,235	296,269	20,034	7·3
Hampshire	1,082,565	1,159,401	76,836	7·1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	326,312	348,464	22,152	6·8
Oxfordshire	385,767	411,611	25,844	6·7
Devon	712,628	759,902	47,274	6·6
Hereford and Worcester	472,385	502,608	30,223	6·4
Lincolnshire	409,031	434,030	24,999	6·1
Suffolk	436,564	462,145	25,581	5·9
Bedfordshire	360,513	381,590	21,077	5·8
West Sussex	518,911	547,523	28,612	5·5
Norfolk	531,896	560,512	28,616	5·4
Essex	1,109,513	1,167,926	58,413	5·3
North Yorkshire	509,076	535,410	26,334	5·2

Retirement Pensions

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a man is entitled to his retirement pension from the date of his 65th birthday; and whether a woman is entitled to his retirement pension from the date of her 60th birthday.

Mr. Lyell: If the retirement and contribution conditions are satisfied, state retirement pension is payable from the first pay day following minimum pension age, which is 65 for a man and 60 for a woman. A married woman can receive a retirement pension based on the national insurance contributions paid by her husband, but it is not payable until the husband claims his own pension.

Community Care

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what direction he has given to regional health authorities regarding the application of funds derived from the sale of assets to the development of community care services.

Mrs. Currie: The instructions to regional health authorities in the National Health Service handbook on land transactions, require that proceeds from the sales of surplus National Health Service land and property should normally accrue to the disposing hospital or the district health authority for re-investment in the service. Proceeds from sales of mental illness or mental handicap hospitals are required to be used specifically for the development of better services for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped including community-based services.

Irradiated Foods

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is in a position to announce his conclusions on the report on the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated foods following the end of the consultation period.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) on 23 October at columns *978-980*.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the chairman of the social services committee of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities concerning his observations on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act at the Cardiff social services conference; what reply he is sending; if he will be meeting the association to discuss the Act's implementation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The chairman of the social services committee of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities wrote to my right hon. Friend on 9 October, and I hope to reply shortly.

Benefit Claims

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the number of benefit claims in action, live load, in August 1979 and August 1986 in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Lyell: The table shows the number of supplementary benefit claims in action—live load—in August 1979 and August 1986 in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland.

	August 1979	August 1986
Greenock and Port Glasgow	9,448	16,939
Strathclyde	183,606	317,032
Scotland	316,287	547,995

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of benefit claims awaiting processing, backlog, in August 1979 and August 1986 in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Lyell: Figures for the number of claims awaiting action in local offices are not available for the period before 1983. The number of claims to supplementary benefit awaiting action on 30 August 1983 and 16 August 1986 is as follows:

	30 August 1983	26 August 1986
Greenock and Port Glasgow	282	585
Strathclyde	3,745	7,473
Scotland as a whole	8,281	15,644

Local Office Staffs

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of staff employed in his Department's local offices in July 1979 and July 1986 in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Lyell: The number of staff in post on 1 July for the requested years is as follows:

	1979	1986
Greenock and Port Glasgow[1]	211	250·5
Strathclyde	3,933	4,401
Scotland	6,947	7,769

[1] The figures for 1979 and 1986 are not strictly comparable because of minor boundary changes in 1982 affecting Greenock.

Single Payments

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total amount of moneys paid out in single payments in 1979 and 1985 by his Department's offices in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde region, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Great Britain as a whole;

(2) what was the average amount paid in single payments to claimants in his Department's offices in 1979 and 1985 in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* England and Wales and *(e)* Great Britain.

Mr. Lyell: The information requested is shown in the tables for years ending early in April. However, the two sets of figures are not directly comparable; single payments replaced exceptional needs payments in November 1980.

Table 1
Total amount paid

	1979-80	1985-86[1]
	£	£
Greenock and Port Glasgow	193,631	1,872,494
Strathclyde region	6,585,310	43,802,212
Scotland	10,019,290	71,109,989
Great Britain	40,031,109	334,408,813

[1] 1985-86 figures are provisional.

Table 2
Average payment

	1979-80	1985-86
	£	£
Greenock and Port Glasgow	39	85
Strathclyde	53	81
Scotland	52	88
England and Wales	34	68
Great Britain	37	76

Figures are rounded to the nearest £. 1985-86 figures are provisional.

Severe Weather Payments

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total number of severe weather payments paid by his Department to claimants for the month of February 1986 in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Scotland, and *(d)* Great Britain as a whole;

(2) what was the average amount paid in severe weather payments to claimants for the month of February 1986 in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Great Britain as a whole.

Mr. Lyell: The information requested is not yet available. Local offices have been asked to make a return giving the total number of payments made and the amounts paid, and I shall write to the hon. Member when this exercise has been completed.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those health authorities which have district-wide computerised cervical cancer call and recall schemes in operation;

(2) if he will list those health authorities which do not have district-wide cervical cancer call and recall schemes in operation but which have plans to do so, giving the estimated date of introduction in each case.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Sevices if he will list those health authorities which have district-wide computerised cervical cancer recall but not call schemes in operation.

Mrs. Currie: Other than the 22 listed in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdinton (Mr. Corbett) on 24 October, all health authorities were operating a district-wide recall scheme as at 31 March 1986. Comprehensive information on health authorities with computerised recall but not call schemes is not held centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many nurses have been trained exclusively in the private sector in each year since 1979;

(2) how many nurses have received post basic education in the private sector in each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: I understand from the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting that the numbers of nurses trained exclusively in the private sector were as follows:

	Year ended 31 March	
	1985	*1986*
Basic nurse training	41	42
Post basic nurse training	47	48

Information for earlier years is not available.

McColl Report

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action has so far been taken in regard to the recommendations of the McColl report; when he will be taking any further action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: On publication of the McColl report in January, we asked the National Health Service management board to oversee the programme of action to develop the artificial limb and appliance centre services, and for advice on some of the major issues raised in the report. We also invited interested organisations and individuals to comment. To ensure that action was carried forward quickly, we appointed as an interim measure a general manager to head the Department's new disablement services division.

Under the direction of the National Health Service management board and the general manager, a programme of action to improve standards of service where possible immediately is being vigorously pursued. For example, initiatives are being taken to improve transport and appointment arrangements; to ensure the availability of the full range of limb systems at each centre and to reduce delivery times; to introduce more attractive, coloured wheelchairs and a new basic wheelchair for occasional use; to improve management information and financial control systems, including the wider installation of computers; and to develop closer links with other related services for disabled people.

We have not yet completed our consideration of future organisational arrangements and certain other policy issues raised by the McColl report. I shall inform the House as soon as conclusions are reached.

Under-fives' Initiative

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement about the future of the under-fivess' initiative after April 1987;

(2) if he will consider joint transitional funding with the appropriate local authority for those projects started under the under-fives' initiative which have yet to receive firm commitments of funding after 31 March 1987.

Mrs. Currie: The initiative comes to an end on 31 March 1987. The voluntary agencies participating in the initiative have asked the Department to look into the feasibility of setting up a limited scheme of tapering grants after March 1987. This is being considered. The Department will be analysing the impact of the initiative and the lessons to be learnt from the exercise.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those projects started under the under-fives' initiative, stating which have received firm commitments of funding after 31 March 1987.

Mrs. Currie: At present 32 projects under the under-fives' initiative have secured funding from March 1987 onwards. I shall write to the hon. Member when the complete picture is available.

Radiotherapy Department (Southend)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce his decision on the proposal of the North East Thames regional health authority to close the radiotherapy department in Southend; and what criteria he takes into account in making decisions on such proposals.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 October 1986, c. *870*]: North East Thames regional health authority's proposal to close the radiotherapy unit at Southend will be the subject of full public consultation by the district health authority. If the local community health council objects to the proposal and the regional health authority intends to proceed to close the unit, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will then be asked to make a final decision on the proposed closure, taking account of all relevant factors.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has received from the general public on the proposal to close Southend's radiotherapy cancer unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 October, c. *870*]: We have received 10 letters which have been referred by hon. Members, together with about 100 letters direct from members of the general public. All such representations will be taken into account if my right hon. Friend is required to take a final decision on the proposal to close the radiotherapy unit at Southend.

Regional Health Authorities (Gifts)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidance to regional health authorities on the propriety of their receiving gifts from district health authorities conditional on specialist facilities being located within their districts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 October, c. *870*]: We are not aware that such guidance may be needed. If my hon. Friend has evidence of a need for guidance of this nature, I would be grateful if he would draw it to my attention. It is for regional health authorities to decide upon the most appropriate location for regional specialist facilities, taking into account all relevant factors.

Southend Health Authority

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to require the North East Thames regional health authority to make good the underfunding of the Southend health authority on the basis of the resource allocation working party formula; and what has been the total of this underfunding over the past five years.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 October, c. *870*]: The resource allocation working party formula, first used in 1977-78, demonstrated that the North East Thames regional health authority was overfunded by 13·7 per cent. in that year. The overfunding has been reduced to 9·7 per cent. in 1985-86, and 5·9 per cent. in 1986-87. For 1986-87 the particular difficulties of the region have been recognised, and additional cash of £52·4 million injected.

The allocation of funds to Southend health authority is a matter for North East Thames regional health authority, but I understand that net revenue expenditure for Southend has increased from £34·6 million in 1982-83 to £42·3 million in 1985-86, an increase of 6 per cent. in real terms, compared to a regional decrease of 1·1 per cent. over the same period.

Recent capital items in Southend health authority include a 20-place day hospital for the elderly at Westcliff hospital. In addition a major development at Rochford hospital costing £5·5 million including a rehabilitation department, four wards for the elderly, and three day hospitals (for the elderly, elderly mentally infirm, and the mentally ill), will be completed by 1988.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, before introducing proposed legislation on the community charge in Scotland he will consult the National Federation of Old Age Pensioners Associations about the consequences for those whose sole income is a retirement pension.

Mr. Ancram: All interested parties had the opportunity to comment on the proposals contained in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) during the consultation period. My right hon. and learned Friend will take account of all comments made during that period before introducing his legislative proposals.

Argyll and Clyde Health Board

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if the number of medical and nursing staff in the hospital service will be increased when the Argyll and Clyde health board opens its new general hospital in Paisley;

(2) if any additional medical services will be offered to the Argyll and Clyde health board when it opens its new general hospital in Paisley.

Mr. John MacKay: The new Royal Alexandra hospital will replace the existing acute hospital accommodation in and around Paisley. No additional specialties will be provided but the population will benefit from the replacement of old, unsatisfactory accommodation with a modern hospital complex providing a range of sophisticated and improved facilities. This will lead to higher levels of efficiency and standards of care. No increases in the numbers of medical staff are currently planned but there will be some increase in nurse staffing.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether any auxiliary staff have been declared redundant in the Argyll and Clyde health board area in the last three months;

(2) what percentage of auxiliary hospital jobs will be lost when the Royal Alexandra infirmary closes, and facilities are centred at the new general hospital at Meiklebriggs in Paisley.

Mr. John MacKay: No auxiliary staff have been made redundant. There will be a reduction of 18·8 per cent. in the number of jobs in the ancillary services being centralised at the new Royal Alexandra hospital. The reductions will be achieved through natural wastage.

Chairs of Medicine

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if any chairs of medicine will be located in the Argyll and Clyde health board area when the new general hospital in Paisley opens;

(2) what is his policy regarding chairs of medicine in the West of Scotland continuing to be based in Glasgow.

Mr. John MacKay: The location of chairs of medicine is a matter for the relevant university, responsibility for which lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I am not aware, however, of any proposal to site a professorial chair at the Royal Alexandra hospital.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his policy towards the removal by the health authority of patients in the Greater Glasgow health board area, within which specialist facilities are available;

(2) what assessment he makes of the impact of the building of new hospitals in the precincts of the Greater Glasgow health board area on the number of referals in Glasgow; and if he will make the appropriate financial adjustments to lighten the workload.

Mr. John MacKay: The new district general hospital at Paisley has been built to provide general acute services to all the residents of the Paisley and Renfrew districts including those who previously had to look to hospitals in Glasgow because of a lack of facilities in Paisley. Patients requiring treatment of a more specialist nature will, however, continue to be referred to the appropriate specialist hospitals in Glasgow. To the extent that the new hospital results in a reduction in the number of referrals into Glasgow, the financial allocations to each health board will automatically be adjusted to allow for the changes in the number of patients being treated in each board.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many recorded deaths there have been in Scotland in the current year resulting from cervical cancer.

Mr. John MacKay: One hundred and two[1] deaths from cervical cancer[2] were recorded in Scotland during the first six months of 1986.

[1] Provisional.

[2] International Classification of Diseases Code 180.

Leukaemia

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuant to his replies of 14 July, *Official Report*, column 666, whether he has received the full study of the incidence of leukaemia in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I expect the report of the full study to be published very shortly. A copy will then be placed in the Library, and the results referred to the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, for advice on the possible need for further investigative work.

Road Passenger Transport (Jobs)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of *(a)* the total number of new jobs created and *(b)* the total number of jobs lost, in the road passenger transport industry in Scotland as a result of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Ancram: It is too early to say what the overall effects on employment of the Transport Act 1985 will be. However, the Act gives operators considerable opportunities to develop new services which will mean more jobs, reversing the long term decline of the industry. It will also create other opportunities — for instance, in bus building.

Ferries

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what study he has made of the possibility of establishing a ferry service between Europe and the east coast of Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: None. It is essentially for commercial operators to identify opportunities.

Mr. Allan Adams asked the Secretatry of State for Scotland if he will take steps to insure that there is no increase in ferry fares in Scotland in the current financial year.

Mr. Ancram: Generally speaking, fares and tariffs on ferry services are commercial matters for the operators concerned to determine, taking account as necessary of the announced level of Government subsidy for their services. Revenue support for major sea transport services in the current financial year amounts to £13·6 million, which represents a significant subvention for the farepayer.

Buses

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of existing bus services in Scotland have been registered to operate after 26th October 1986 under the Transport Act 1985; and if he will give the respective figure for each region.

Mr. Ancram: Figures for the whole of Scotland are not available. In the study areas of Strathclyde, Lothian and Dumfries and Galloway, the comparative figures for bus departures on weekday timetables, which provide the best available measure at present of changes in the services operated, are as follows:

	November 1985	*October 1986*	*Percentage increase*
Strathclyde	8,570	9,906	16
Lothian	2,607	2,915	9
Dumfries and Galloway	466	494	6

The figures for Dumfries and Galloway include tendered services. The figures for Strathclyde and Lothian are for commercial registrations only.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Strathclyde about the problems for traffic control caused by the number of buses operating in Glasgow city centre.

Mr. Ancram: No. Section 7 of the Transport Act 1985 enables a traffic authority, in this case Strathclyde regional council, to ask the traffic commissioner to determine traffic regulation conditions to deal with congestion problems. I understand that Strathclyde regional council is already discussing this question with other interested parties.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new operators have applied to run bus services in Scotland as a result of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Ancram: 83 new operator licences have been granted in the Scottish traffic area to operators who have not previously held road service licences. This figure will almost certainly increase as figures for operators of tendered services become available.

Airports

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what as been the loss of jobs at Scottish airports since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The total number of staff employed at the British Airports Authority's Scottish airports and the Civil Aviation Authority's Highland and Island aerodromes in each year since 1979 is as follows:

	BAA Scottish Airports[1]	*CAA Airports*[2]
1978-79	6,677	144
1979-80	7,384	166
1980-81	7,358	165
1981-82	7,202	157
1982-83	6,683	137
1983-84	6,997	128
1984-85	7,186	124
1985-86	7,238	122

[1] These figures include staff employed by the BAA, the Government, airlines, concessionaires and contractors based at the airports. (Source BAA annual report.)

[2] These figures exclude Air Traffic Control and Telecommunications staff. (Source CAA.)

Figures for local authority and privately owned airports are not available.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent in the National Health Service in the Greater Glasgow health board in each year since 1980; and if he will express these figures using a gross domestic product deflator for constant prices.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	Gross NHS expenditure at cash prices[1] *£ million*	*At 1984/85 prices as measured by GDP*deflator £ million*
1980-81	324·710	416·797
1981-82	364·281	425·572
1982-83	387·187	421·873

	Gross NHS expenditure at cash prices[1] *£ million*	*At 1984/85 prices as measured by GDP deflator £ million*
1983-84	408·126	425·583
1984-85	438·034	438·034
1985-86[2]	[2]462·591	[2]436·394

[1] Comprising expenditure on hospital and community services, family practitioner services and capital.
[2] Provisional figures.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent in the National Health Service in Argyll and Clyde health board in each year since 1980; and if he will express each of these figures using a gross domestic product deflator for constant prices.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	Gross NHS expenditure at cash prices[1] *£ million*	*At 1984-85 prices as measured by GDP deflator £ million*
1980-81	96·138	123·403
1981-82	113·284	132·358
1982-83	122·350	133·311
1983-84	132·917	138·602
1984-85	136·727	136·727
1985-86[2]	141·364[2]	133·358[2]

[1] Comprising expenditure on hospital and community services, family practitioner services and capital.
[2] Provisional figures.

Financial Assistance

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for the last year for which figures are available, the total amounts of financial assistance made available for the Scottish Development Agency and the Highland and Islands Development Board, respectively, both in total and per head of the insured population for the areas covered.

Mr. Lang: The information for 1985-86 is set out in the table:

	SDA	*HIDB*
Total resources made available £ million	127·9	39·6
Economically active population	2,242,650	146,320
Per Capita Resources made available £	57	271

The economically active population corresponds broadly with the insured population (a term which is now obsolete). Figures have been derived from the 1981 census. Certain functions of the SDA's remit extend to the whole of Scotland but for the purpose of this answer the SDA's area has been defined as that part of Scotland not covered by the HIDB.

Orlit Houses

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of local authorities with Orlit and Orlit-type houses in their area, and, for each local authority and the Scottish Special Housing Association, showing total numbers of houses, numbers demolished, numbers on which remedial work has started and numbers still awaiting attention.

Mr. Ancram: The table lists Scottish local authorities which have publicly owned Orlit or Blackburn-Orlit dwellings in their areas; the numbers reported to be owned by local auhorities and other public bodies excepting the Scottish Special Housing Association; and the numbers now owned by the Scottish Special Housing Association.

Information is not held centrally on the numbers demolished or on which remedial works have been undertaken by the local authorities: but the Scottish Special Housing Association has demolished 144 Orlit dwellings and has carried out remedial works on 582 out of the 964 it now owns.

In addition, the local authorities own approximately 400 single-storey Orlit bungalows which are not included in the above totals.

Table showing distribution of Orlit and Blackburn-Orlit dwellings by local authority area
Dwellings in private ownership are not included

	Orlit		*Blackburn-Orlit*
	Reported to be owned by local authority and other public bodies	*Currently owned by Scottish Special Housing Association*	*Reported to be owned by local authority*
Central			
Clackmannan	54	—	—
Falkirk	452	—	—
Stirling	272	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway			
Stewartry	40	—	—
Fife			
Dunfermline	124	—	—
Kirkcaldy	175	—	—
Grampian			
Aberdeen City	—	131	—
Banff and Buchan	124	—	—
Kincardine and Deeside	46	—	—
Moray	50	—	—

	Orlit		Blackburn-Orlit
	Reported to be owned by local authority and other public bodies	*Currently owned by Scottish Special Housing Association*	*Reported to be owned by local authority*
Lothian			
East Lothian	208	—	—
Edinburgh City	602	2	214
Midlothian	263	—	—
West Lothian	217	—	—
Strathclyde			
Argyll and Bute	77	—	—
Clydebank	—	—	4
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	18	—	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley	24	—	—
Cunninghame	54	108	—
Dumbarton	443	—	—
Glasgow City	453	490	134
Hamilton	204	106	—
Kyle and Carrick	—	74	—
Monklands	104	—	—
Renfrew	46	—	—
Strathkelvin	34	—	—
Tayside			
Angus	105	—	—
Dundee City	553	53	—
Perth and Kinross	47	—	—
Islands			
Western Isles	4	—	—
TOTALS	4,793	964	352

Labour Statistics

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number and percentage of those unemployed in Greenock and Port Glasgow who have been out of work for *(a)* up to one year, *(b)* up to two years and *(c)* up to three years.

Mr. Lang: At 10 July 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency by duration, and the percentage each category represents of the total number of unemployed claimants, is shown below. This information is available in the Library.

Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency

Duration of unemployment	*Number of unemployed claimants*	*Percentage of total number of unemployed claimants*
Up to 1 year	4,315	51·9
1 to 2 years	1,590	19·1
2 to 3 years	867	10·4

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will disaggregate the latest available unemployment figures for Greenock and Port Glasgow by age group.

Mr. Lang: At 10 July 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants disaggregated by age group in the Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency is as shown in the table. This information is available in the Library.

Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency

Age group	*Number of unemployed claimants*
Under 17	119
Aged 17	345
18	377
19	368
20-24	1,689
25-29	1,136
30-34	830
35-39	761
40-44	701
45-49	656
50-54	612
55-59	628
60 and over	100
Total	8,322

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average number of people unemployed in Greenock and Port Glasgow in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. For the Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency the annual average unemployment from June 1983, the earliest date for which figures are available, to September 1986 is shown in table A. For the Greenock travel-to-work area (which covers a larger area than the constituency but for which the information requested is available) the figures are shown in table B. This information is available in the Library. Due to the various changes which have taken place in the compilation of the unemployment statistics the figures are not directly comparable.

Table A: Greenock and Port Glasgow Parliamentary Constituency

Year	Average number of unemployed
[1]1983	6,904
1984	7,570
1985	8,319
[2]1986	8,755

[1] 7 months only
[2] 9 months only

Table B: Greenock Travel-to-work Area

Year	Average number of unemployed
1979	5,503
1980	6,861
1981	8,295
1982	8,571
1983	8,248
1984	8,704
1985	9,576
[1]1986	10,133

[1] 9 months only

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people in Greenock and Port Glasgow have never had a job since leaving school.

Mr. Lang: At 11 September 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of people under the age of 18 in the Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency who have never had a job since leaving school totalled 494.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of people in Greenock and Port Glasgow unemployed for one year or more in each year since 1979; and what percentage of the total number of the unemployed they make up in each case.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. For the Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency the number of unemployed claimants for one year or more in July of each year from 1983 (the earliest date for which figures are available) and the percentage of the total number of unemployed claimants they represent, is shown in table A. For the Greenock travel-to-work area (which covers a larger area than the constituency but for which the information requested is available) the figures are shown in table B. This information is available in the Library. Due to the various changes in the compilation of the unemployment statistics the figures are not directly comparable.

Table A: Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency

Year (July)	Number of unemployed claimants over one year	Percentage of total number of unemployed claimants
1983	2,970	43·4
1984	2,957	38·3
1985	3,475	42·3
1986	4,007	48·1

Table B: Greenock travel-to-work area

Year (July)	Number of unemployed claimants over one year	Percentage of total number of unemployed claimants
1979	1,410	24·1
1980	1,608	22·5
1981	2,724	31·1
1982	3,428	39·8
1983	3,263	41·0
1984	3,265	36·7
1985	3,814	40·0
1986[1]	4,419	45·4

[1] Nine months only.

Inverclyde District Council

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express the housing support grant awarded to Inverclyde district council at constant prices in each year since 1980.

Mr. Ancram: The information is given in the table:

Housing support grant paid (£)

Year	At outturn prices	At 1985-86 average prices[1]
1980-81	6,140,965	8,355,737
1981-82	4,443,201	5,502,961
1982-83	3,048,261	3,520,704
1983-84	1,865,250	2,061,802
1984-85	1,162,804	1,232,607
1985-86	562,537	562,537

[1] Using GDP deflators.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage level of rate support grant made available to Inverclyde district council and Scotland overall in 1980 and at the latest date.

Mr. Ancram: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Manufacturing Industry

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons were working in manufacturing industry in Greenock and Port Glasgow in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and what is the latest available figure.

Mr. Lang: Comprehensive estimates of the number of people working in manufacturing industry in the Greenock and Port Glasgow area are not available for the period 1979 to 1985. However, the table gives the estimated number of those working in manufacturing plants with over 10 employees in the Greenock travel-to-work area for each year from 1979 to 1985, the latest available year. These estimates are taken from the regional data system. No reliable information is available from this source for plants with less than 10 employees. The estimates for the latest years are provisional.

Year	Estimated employees in employment
1979	20,900
1980	18,700
1981	17,400
1982	16,300
1983	16,300
1984	14,300
1985	12,400

DEFENCE

Maralinga (Clean-up Costs)

79. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has made to the request from the Australian Government for a financial contribution to the cost of studies on means of clearing up the Maralinga nuclear test site; what progress has been made on joint technical studies by British and Australian scientists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following the report to him by the technical assessment group (TAG), to which the United Kingdom provided two technical experts, Senator Evans requested assistance with a two-year research programme. In London on 3 October 1986 the Minister of State for Defence Procurement agreed, as part of the United Kingdom commitment to provide technical advice, to give support to the research studies which Senator Evans had decided were necessary before practical and cost-effective clean-up options could be fully developed. The two Ministers also recognised that uncertainties about what will be involved in the studies would have to be taken up in a further round of detailed official-level discussions planned to take place in Australia within the next two months.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy towards the statement by United States Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Policy, Mr. Richard Perle, that fears of a zero option for INF in Europe leading to NATO vulnerability to Soviet conventional superiority are unfounded;

(2) what is his policy towards the statement by United States Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Policy, Mr. Richard Perle, that a zero option for INF in Europe will not impair flexible response, nor the United States guarantee to defend Europe.

Mr. Stanley: I indicated the Government's view of the INF zero option in my reply to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) on 23 October, at column 1294. An INF agreement on the basis I indicated would not impair NATO's security or invalidate either the strategy of flexible response or the United States' commitment to the defence of the NATO European countries.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the statement by United States Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Policy, Mr. Richard Perle, that Soviet short-range INF missiles are not at significantly higher levels than in 1976.

Mr. Stanley: Since the mid-1970s the Soviet Union has been modernising its shorter-range intermediate and short range nuclear missile forces. There has been some net increase in numbers over this period, and the newly deployed systems such as the SS21 and the SS23 are more capable than their predecessors. In addition the older system Scaleboard (range 900 km) is now deployed forward into East Germany and Czechoslavia which was not the case 10 years ago. These are significant developments.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment he has made of the likely impact of an agreement to withdraw all INF missiles from Europe on the implementation of the Montebello decision to reduce and redistribute the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's nuclear stockpile;

(2) what assessment has been made of the implications of an agreement to withdraw all INF missiles from Europe for the emphasis on nuclear roles for dual-capable INF aircraft such as the F111;

(3) what assessment has been made of the likely impact of an agreement to withdraw all cruise, Pershing 2 and SS20 missiles from Europe on North Atlantic Treaty Organisation plans to deploy a new generation of chemical and short-range INF weapons.

Mr. Stanley: It is too early to be able to assess what could be the precise implications of a zero option long-range INF agreement for NATO's future tactical nuclear plans and weapons procurement programmes. A significant factor would be the terms and nature of the collateral constraints applying to shorter-range systems which have still to be determined.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards deployment by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of the W79 nuclear warhead.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield (Mr. Caborn) on 20 January, at columns 90-91, and to the latest communique of the NATO nuclear planning group, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. No decisions have been taken regarding the modernisation of the battlefield nuclear weapons of British forces.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 30 June, column *438*, if he will list the reasons given by those other states participating at the Geneva conference on disarmament for their rejection of Her Majesty's Government's proposal for an ad hoc committee to discuss seismological verification of a comprehensive nuclear weapons test ban.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply.

The difference between the draft mandate for an ad hoc committee proposed by the United Kingdom together with a number of Western countries and those proposed by others is that the Western mandate does not envisage the immediate resumption of negotiations, while those other mandates do.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards regular meetings with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Ministers for the purpose of discussing means of advancing the resolution of the technical difficulties associated with verifying a comprehensive nuclear weapons test ban.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply.

While nuclear testing issues are discussed in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, for example at the recent meeting of the nuclear planning group, NATO is not the appropriate forum to discuss the resolution of the technical difficulties associated with verifying a comprehensive nuclear test ban. As we have made clear to the House on numerous occasions, we hope to see further work on such issues at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 30 October 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Long Lawford

26. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Long Lawford near Rugby

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Tropical Forests

72. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to seek to promote the preservation of tropical forests through the co-ordination of aid policies in the form of incentives to projects for viable agriculture and forestry schemes in rain forest zones, with trade policies for the encouragement of commerce in sustainably produced tropical hardwoods; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's commitment to the wise use and replenishment of the world's tropical forests was confirmed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), then Minister for Overseas Development, on 19 May, at column 18. We already support forest management projects in rain forest zones through the aid programme and are ready to consider further proposals. The Government have also given their support to the Food and Agriculture Organisation's tropical forestry action plan.

The Government ratified the international tropical timber agreement in 1984 and are a member of the related Tropical Timber Organisation, which was established in 1986. One of the principal functions of this organisation is to encourage trade in tropical hardwoods on the basis of sustainable and renewable resources.

World Food Conference

121. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Prime Minister what response she has made to the proposal of Sir Henry Plumb, a member of the European Parliament, for a world food conference to consider the food surpluses of the developed world against the background of famine in the developing world.

The Prime Minister: We very much share the concerns expressed by Sir Henry Plumb and we have already taken initiatives in the appropriate organisations. But famine prevention and agricultural surpluses are separate issues and must therefore be tackled separately.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 October.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 October.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Eurotunnel plc

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Prime Minister what recent discussions she or her Ministers have had with Eurotunnel plc on the structure of the company; and if it remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government not to invest directly in the consortium.

The Prime Minister: Neither I nor any other Ministers have had discussions with Eurotunnel plc about the structure of the company. As I made clear to the House on Tuesday, no Government money will be involved in the project.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

AIDS

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and science what plans he has to educate children as to the possible health hazards of *(a)* promiscuity and *(b)* homosexuality, with specific reference to acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government have made it clear, in their recent draft circular on sex education at school and in the booklet "Children at School and problems related to AIDS", circulated under cover of "Administrative Memorandum 2/86", that schools should see it as part of their task to warn pupils of the health risks of promiscuous sexual behaviour, whether heterosexual or homosexual, and should provide factual information about the AIDS virus (HIV) and modes of transmission of infection.

Single Sex Education

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Government policy on single sex school education.

Mr. Dunn: The Government wish to preserve existing opportunities for parents to opt for single sex schools where the demand warrants it and where the schools are educationally effective.

Rothampsted Experimental Research Station

Mr. Torney asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent cuts in expenditure have affected Rothampsted experimental research station; and whether further cuts are contemplated.

Mr. Walden: Rothampsted experimental station (RES) is a grant-aided institute of the Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC). I understand from the AFRC that reductions in funding have resulted in the termination, deferment and curtailment of some work at RES. This includes work on the regulation of plant processes, soil properties and composition, soil fertility and plant nutrition, crops and their environment, yield variation and aerobiology, pests of non-cereal arable crops and soil management and cultivation.

The work programme of the soil survey and land resources centre (SSLRC), located at RES, is being curtailed following reductions in the funds for work commissioned by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Decisions about future financial provision for RES will be taken by AFRC once my right hon. friend, on the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, has decided the level of the council's grant-in-aid for 1987-88. These decisions will be taken towards the end of this calendar year.

Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his recent discussion with a delegation of Liverpool parents about the problems facing the education system in that city.

Mr. Dunn: I met members of the Liverpool Association of Parent Governors and Representatives on 27 October. They expressed concern about aspects of school provision in Liverpool. Following the meeting I undertook to write to the association about a number of the points raised by the members.

Literacy

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the level of Government funding of the adult basic literacy unit for the current and three previous financial years; and what is the estimated contribution for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: The adult literacy and basic skills unit (ALBSU) is jointly funded by the DES and the Welsh Office. The information requested is as follows:

Financial year	*DES grant* £	*Welsh Office grant* £	*Total grant* £
1983-84	1,439,267	38,160	1,477,427
1984-85	1,361,937	51,843	1,413,780
1985-86	1,638,000	Nil	1,638,000
[1]1986-87	2,052,000	118,000	2,170,000
[1]1987-88	2,052,000	123,000	2,175,000

[1] Estimated contributions.

Adult Education

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funding has been given in each of the last three years to the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education for local development projects for the unemployed.

Mr. Walden: The funding was £119,206 in the financial year 1984-85 (the first year of the REPLAN programme), £528,671 in 1985-86, and (on present plans) up to £583,000 in the current financial year. These figures include contributions from the Welsh Office and the Manpower Services Commission.

Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am of course aware of the views expressed in the third report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee (House of Commons 40-1) and the Government will offer a full response to this report in due course. I do not propose to anticipate that in any detailed way, but I do wish to make plain my confidence in the council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. The council was established only after the fullest consultation with all the major interest groups and there was similar wide consultation about the basis for its scrutiny of teacher training programmes. I believe that the council is contributing substantially to the improvement of initial teacher training. It is carrying out that important task effectively and with tact and consideration. It has my full confidence. In due course the council will complete its remit. I will then review the position, but meantime I propose no change in its terms of reference or the criteria to which it is working.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates Courts (London)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Attorney-General under what powers prosecutions in magistrates courts in London were conducted under the title of the Crown Prosecution Service before 1 October.

The Attorney-General: Commencing in the latter part of 1985, the Director of Public Prosecutions began to establish a network of local offices in the Metropolitan police and Surrey constabulary areas. They were grouped in three areas (inner London, outer London north and outer London South-Surrey) corresponding with the proposed areas for the Crown Prosecution Service. Although such offices may sometimes have been referred to as the Crown Prosecution Service, they in fact constituted part of the Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions and each area was headed by an assistant director of public prosecutions; the discharge of their duties was governed by the Prosecution of Offences Act 1979 and the regulations made thereunder. Section 4 of the Act empowers the director to assume responsibility for any prosecutions irrespective of who may have instituted the proceedings.

Hackney Council Chamber (Firearms Incident)

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if he will call on the Director of Public Prosecutions to investigate the circumstances surrounding the firing of a loaded pistol in the council chamber of the London borough of Hackney on 22 October.

The Attorney-General: No. The director has neither the facilities nor the powers necessary for the investigation of alleged crime. That is the function of the police, and I understand that an inquiry is in progress.

BBC (Libel Action)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Attorney-General what action he proposes to take on the representations he has received concerning alleged interference with witnesses in the cases of Hamilton *v.* BBC and Howarth *v.* BBC.

The Attorney-General: I have received no representations of the nature mentioned in the question. The position is as stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 29 October 1986.

Newspapers (Prosecutions)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General if he will institute proceedings under the Race Relations Act against the *Daily Express, Daily Mail,* and the *Sun* in the light of material published by them between 14 and 17 October regarding the introduction of the new visa system for visitors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ghana; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Although my consent is required for the institution of proceedings under section 5A of the Public Order Act 1936, the investigation of any such alleged offences is, as with any other alleged criminal offence, a function of the police and not the Director of Public Prosecutions or myself. If the hon. Member considers that an offence may have been committed, the proper course is for him to refer the matter to the police so that if, after proper investigation, it is appropriate, a report may be submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service with a view to obtaining my consent for proceedings.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Mr. William McCrae

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many police reports were made on the death of Mr. William McCrae in April 1985; by whom; and on which dates.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am unable to provide this information. Reports submitted to the procurator fiscal by the police or any other investigating body or individual are confidential.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of *(a)* the pathologist's report and *(b)* the police reports into the death of Mr. William McCrae, a solicitor, in April 1985.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No. Such reports are confidential.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland on whose authority the decision was taken not to hold a fatal accident inquiry into the death of Mr William McCrae in April 1985; and when that decision was taken.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The decision not to hold a fatal accident inquiry was taken on 24 June 1985 on the authority of the Lord Advocate as required in terms of the Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths Inquiry (Scotland) Act 1976.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Durham prison

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state *(a)* how many women on Durham H wing have been diagnosed as suffering from amenorrhoea during the past 24 months and *(b)* how many women on Durham H wing have undergone hysterectomies within the last 24 months.

Mr. Mellor: I am advised by the Director of Prison Medical Services that he would consider it a breach of medical confidentially to publish sensitive medical information relating to patients in a particular establishment or unit because of the risk of identification of individual patients. If the hon. Member is concerned about a particular case or cases and will write to me I will endeavour to assist her.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the ages of the women who have been detained in Durham H wing during the past 24 months.

Mr. Mellor: The ages on reception of the women who have been detained in Durham H wing during the past 24 months are as follows:

Age on reception	*Number*
18	1
19	4
20	4
21	3
22	3
23	7
24	2
25	2
26	5
27	1
28	2
29	2
30	2
31	6
32	2
33	3
34	1
35	3
36	3
37	1
38	1
39	2
40	1
43	1
46	1
51	2
53	2
53	2
54	1
56	2
57	1
63	1

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women have been detained in Durham H wing during the past 24 months.

Mr. Mellor: Including the present population, 72.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners at Durham prison have relatives living within a 50-mile radius of the prison.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not held separately and could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many strip searches were carried out in Durham prison H wing within the last 12 months on *(a)* all prisoners and *(b)* category A prisoners; and what unlawful materials were found as a result of these searches.

Mr. Mellor: Strip searching is a routine security measure, and establishments are not required to record all such searches. However, Durham has, exceptionally, begun to keep records of strip searches in respect of category A female inmates. These, together with earlier

records of cell changes and cell searches (which would normally involve a strip search), indicate that during the 12 months ending 30 September there were 53 strip searches of category A female prisoners in Durham.

I understand that records covering the same period show that a quantity of cannabis was found on one occasion during a strip search of a non-category A prisoner. But the justification for strip searching lies not only in the fact that staff do discover items (such as drugs, syringes, plastic knives sharpened into daggers, and scissors) which they would not otherwise find, but in the deterrent effect which such searching undoubtedly has.

Independent Television

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to announce the timetable for tendering for the Independent Television franchises due to end in 1989.

Mr. Mellor: As my right hon. Friend made clear in announcing the Government's initial response to the Peacock committee's report, we are anxious that the option for change in the arrangements for the award of Independent Television contracts should remain open. This would not be the case if the IBA arranges new contracts to take effect from the beginning of 1990 for the maximum of eight years permitted under present law. Accordingly, my right hon. Friend has been considering with the IBA possible alternative arrangements under which contracts would be awarded for a shorter period. He hopes to be able to announce his conclusions before too long.

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration his Department has given to separating the Teletext service, and subscription user group facilities, from the Independent Television programme franchises after 1989.

Mr. Mellor: We shall be looking at these matters, amongst others, in our consideration of the report of the Committee on Financing the BBC.

Visitors

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of those who were admitted as visitors in 1985 from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ghana; how many of these stayed on without permission; and what was the percentage involved.

Mr. Waddington: In 1985 the number of passengers who were admitted as visitors from these countries was:

	Number
India	169,000
Pakistan	81,100
Bangladesh	11,200
Ghana	27,100
Nigeria	164,000

I regret that the other information requested is not available.

IBA (Deputy Chairman)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the appointment of the last deputy chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority expired; and when he intends to appoint a replacement.

Mr. Mellor: The deputy chairman resigned on 7 October 1985. We hope to appoint a replacement shortly.

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to introduce a national scheme of tape recorded interviews between police and suspects; and if he will give a date for its commencement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. We have circulated to police forces and other interested parties a draft code of practice on tape recording of interviews by police officers in police stations with persons suspected of criminal offences. After considering comments, we intend to lay the code before Parliament early next year for approval, in accordance with section 60 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Tape recording is already under way on a trial basis in areas of several forces. So far some 34 police forces have been allocated funds for the current financial year to prepare interview rooms for use for tape recording. Further funds will be allocated to extend and complete coverage over a five-year period up to 1991.

Teaching Posts, Brent

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new teaching posts have been agreed for the London borough of Brent under section 11 of the Local Government Act; and if he will give details.

Mr. Hurd: Approval in principle was given on 14 August for grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to be paid on 177 posts which Brent intended to establish. These included teaching posts in schools, a programme director, two assistants and five tutors for in-service training. Our understanding was that the aim of these posts was to tackle under-achievement among pupils of Commonwealth origin. Since then, allegations have been made that the council intends to use the posts in ways that go beyond this. I have, therefore, sought further information from Brent. No grant will be paid unless I am satisfied that the posts meet our usual criteria.

Ports of Entry (Security)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Securicor staff are retained by the Home Office on security work at ports of entry; what is the nature of their duties; and what has been the total annual cost in each of the past five years.

Mr. Waddington: Securicor Limited is contracted to the Home Office to provide staff who act as orderlies for passengers under examination by an immigration officer and for the purpose of guarding and escorting persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971.

There are 37 Securicor posts at ports of entry. These are covered by shift work, some for 24 hours per day, so the actual number of personnel employed is greater. The cost of the service is a matter of contract, which it would not be right for me to disclose.

EMPLOYMENT

South Africa

Mr. John Hunt asked the Paymaster General what action is being taken to discourage the promotion of tourism to South Africa.

Mr. Trippier: Following the recent Commonwealth review meeting in London, the British Government decided to put a "voluntary ban" on the promotion of tourism to South Africa. I would like to explain the reasons for this and what it means for the travel trade and the public.

Over the years Britain, along with our Commonwealth and EC partners, has adopted a number of restrictive measures against South Africa. These measures have been designed to impress upon the South African Government the compelling need to dismantle the system of apartheid and to erect the structures of democracy and racial justice in South Africa. The Commonwealth review meeting came to the conclusion that, regrettably, there had not been adequate progress towards the abolition of apartheid, and that further measures were necessary.

In Britain we live in a free society and it would not be right for us to take powers to restrict freedom of travel. In introducing what therefore has to be a voluntary measure, the Government are seeking the co-operation of all those involved that they will not promote South Africa in this country as a tourist destination, that is to say as a destination for leisure travel. It is not intended that those who decide to visit South Africa, for whatever reason, should be prevented from doing so.

I am therefore appealing directly to those in Britain involved in the travel business — travel agents, tour operators and carriers—not to promote South Africa as a tourist destination. I also appeal to the media to refrain from carrying advertisements or other material which promotes South Africa as a tourist destination. My right hon. and noble Friend will be asking ABTA and representatives of the advertising industry to bring the Government's policy to the attention of their members.

I very much hope that those involved will refrain from promoting tourism to South Africa, as a demonstration of the strong opposition in Britain to the principles and practice of apartheid. The decision whether to refrain from promoting tourism to South Africa is one for the individuals, companies and organisations concerned to take.

Meanwhile, if the South African Government were to take those steps for which we and our partners have called, in order to establish a process of dialogue across racial lines, we have made clear, in the Commonwealth communiqué, that we stand ready to review the situation and if appropriate to rescind the measures we have adopted.

Hotel and Catering Industry

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what is the average earnings in the hotel and catering industry; and how this compares with the average for all other sectors of the economy.

Mr. Trippier: The latest available information on average weekly earnings is that for April 1985 and relates to full-time adult employees working a full week. Information on the average earnings in the hotel and catering industry and all other sectors of the economy is published in table X2 of the report, "New Earnings Survey 1985", part B, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what proportion of hotel and restaurant employers visited by the Wages Inspectorate were underpaying workers during the past year; what was the average pay for waitresses during the past year; and what was the average pay for female kitchen staff last year.

Mr. Trippier: No estimates of the proportion of employers paying workers less than the wages councils' minimum rates have been made. However, Wages Inspectorate statistics for 1985 show that 37·3 per cent. of establishments covered by the Licensed Residential Establishment and Licensed Restaurant Wages Council which were visited by wages inspectors were found to have underpaid one or more workers. This figure is not representative of all establishments covered by wages councils because the Wages Inspectorate tends to concentrate on the firms more likely to be underpaying.

The latest available information on gross average earnings for waitresses and female kitchen staff is that for April 1985 and is published in table 9 of part A of "New Earnings Survey 1985", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Inner City Pilot Projects

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in the eight inner city pilot projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The eight inner city task forces have made considerable progress in drawing up, and now starting to implement, plans to achieve the objectives of the inner cities initiative. The task forces are ensuring that existing Government resources are targeted more effectively on their areas, and are also looking for new ways of encouraging employment and enterprise. Already some 34 projects involving about £1·3 million of the inner cities initiative budget have been approved for support. There have also been major projects financed by, for example, the Department of Environment, the Home Office and the Manpower Services Commission under other mainstream programmes in the task force areas as part of our extra attention to those areas.

We are addressing a number of further particular issues:

Plans are advanced for a scheme using local labour on an urban development project in Handsworth. This will ensure that local people benefit from the jobs available. We intend to carry forward this approach in other task force areas.

A number of projects aim to encourage enterprise, particularly among young people and ethnic minorities. These include support for black enterprise agencies, skill training facilities and managed workshops, and the Industrial Society's "Headstart in Business" courses which we are supporting in six task force areas.

We are particularly concerned to encourage sponsorship by private sector firms of projects under the community programme. At least 10 of the 20 pilot community programme projects with improved funding to encourage private sector involvement will be in task force areas.

I have also reached an agreement with the Association of British Insurers to set up contact points to deal locally with problems of the availability of insurance for businesses in our inner cities.

Action for Jobs (Advertising Campaign)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General how much has been spent on the Action for Jobs advertising campaign, nationally and regionally; how he expects to assess its effects; and what effects he expects it to have.

Mr. Lee: So far about £6·5 million has been spent on Action for Jobs advertising. This represents less than 0·01 per cent. of the total expenditure of £3 billion this year on more than 30 employment, enterprise and training measures described in the Action for Jobs booklet. Since this is a national campaign, no regional breakdown is available.

The purpose of the campaign is to increase awareness of the wide range of opportunities on offer and to encourage people to pick up the Action for Jobs booklet. We are monitoring closely the effectiveness of the campaign.

Open College

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Paymaster General on what date he now expects the Open College (College of the Air) to *(a)* begin enrolling students and *(b)* start broadcasting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Open College (the agreed name for what was initially known as the College of the Air) will begin operations (including broadcasting) in September 1987. The detailed arrangements for enrolling students, including timing, are still under consideration. These and other aspects of the college's programme will be announced in due course.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Paymaster General what funds have so far been made available to the Open College (College of the Air), either directly from Government funds or through the Manpower Services Commission; what public funds are anticipated to be required for the Open College for the remainder of this financial year; and what funds have so far been made available from private sources.

Mr. Trippier: While its own staff are being recruited, preparations for the launch of the college are being undertaken by staff of the Manpower Services Commission under the guidance of the college chairman. As yet MSC staff costs represent the only significant element of expenditure on this project. The precise level of expenditure on the college this financial year and in succeeding years will depend on the outcome of the detailed planning and discussions which are now in progress. However, I am pleased to say that the indications so far are that there is substantial private sector interest in sponsoring or otherwise supporting the college's activities.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Paymaster General who determined the level of salary proposed for the chief executive of the Open College (College of the Air).

Mr. Trippier: The chairman of the Open College was advised by independent recruitment consultants that this level of remuneration would need to be offered in order to attract applicants of the required calibre and experience.

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. Steel asked the Paymaster General how many jobs have been created by the Manpower Services Commission's voluntary projects programme sponsored Instant Muscle programme; and how much each job created has cost the Government.

Mr. Trippier: In 1985 Instant Muscle helped 220 young people into self-employment, jobs or the community programme at a cost of around £980 per job. In the first half of 1986, 270 people have entered employment at a cost of around £611 per job.

Mr. Steel asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the Manpower Services Commission's voluntary projects programme decision not to increase its funding of Instant Muscle Ltd. of Slough above that of the 1985 level.

Mr. Trippier: The voluntary projects development programme, from which Instant Muscle is funded, has a similar budget in 1986-87 to that for 1985-86. With other approaches to fostering enterprise within the programme proving successful, it is not possible at present to expand one particular approach.

ENVIRONMENT

Land Register (Searches)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the length of time each London borough takes to reply to local searches in the local land charges register and to standard additional inquiries.

Mr. Chope: My Department does not collect such information, but I understand that the Law Society publishes in its *Gazette* the names of those authorities taking one month or more to respond to such applications.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present number of personnel employed by the Property Services Agency in north Yorkshire, and their locations.

Mr. Chope: The present number of PSA personnel in north Yorkshire is 748 (including 27 non-industrial staff on site control and 447 industrial staff) employed at the following locations:

Location	*Non-industrial*	*Industrial*	*Total*
Area Works Office, York	68	—	68
District Works Office, York	16	21	37
Area District Works Office, Strensall	5	11	16
Area District Works Office, Leconfield	6	22	28
Driffield outstation	1	—	1
District Works Office, Fylingdales	38	121	159
Area District Works Office, Staxton Wold	11	28	39
District Works Office, Disforth	9	16	25
Area District Works Office, RAF Catterick	3	1	4
Area District Works Office, RAF Leeming	8	20	28
Area District Works Office, RAF Topcliffe	5	4	9
Area District Works Office, Linton on Ouse	6	7	13
District Works Office, Harrogate	16	11	27

Location	*Non-industrial*	*Industrial*	*Total*
Area District Works Office, Menwith Hill	19	34	53
Area District Works Office, Ripon	5	12	17
District Works Office, Catterick	35	139	174
Area Estates, Catterick	23	—	23
Full Sutton Site Control	7	—	7
Menwith Hill Site Control	2	—	2
Catterick (MQs and RAF) Site Control	7	—	7
York (Imphal) Site Control	2	—	2
York (IBAP Store) Site Control	1	—	1
Staxton Wold Site Control	1	—	1
RAF Topcliffe Site Control	3	—	3
Steeplebush Site Control	1	—	1
RAF Leeming Site Control	3	—	3
	301	447	748

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total cost of overheads in the running of the Property Services Agency in *(a)* north Yorkshire and *(b)* the Leeds area during the last financial year.

Mr. Chope: Overheads (as per PSA management accounts) for 1985-86 were:

	£ million
(a) North Yorkshire	2·830
(b) Leeds	2·850

Local Authorities (Compulsory Tendering)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been followed in respect of consultation with those concerned in local authorities with the introduction of compulsory tendering in computer services, architectural services, local authority transport, printing and refuse disposal.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 22 October, at cols. 877-78.

Departmental Vote

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any further proposals to revise the cash limit for class 10, vote 2.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class X, vote 2 will be increased by £445,000 from £180,646,000 to £181,091,000 to include the extra resources for the UK2000 initiative I announced on 14 July 1986, at cols. 683-89. The increase will be within the Department's existing public expenditure provision and will not add to the planning total of public expenditure.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial targets he has set the Ordnance Survey for the four years from 1986-87 to 1989-90; and how these will be achieved.

Mr. Waldegrave: After discussion with the Treasury, I have set the following targets for Ordnance Survey:

1. To recover not less than 40 per cent. of the total cost of core activities by 1989-90.
2. To maximise revenue on commercial activities and to recover not less than 110 per cent. of total costs of that category.
3. To recover 100 per cent. of the total cost of public sector repayment work at home and overseas.

The Ordnance Survey plan for 1987-90 based on these targets has been approved and a copy has been deposited in the Library.

Education Pooling

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to make any changes to the 1986-87 cash limit for rate support grants to local authorities in England in respect of education pooling.

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Education and Science announced in December 1985 the revised contributions of local authorities to the education pools for 1985-86. The Inner London education authority's contribution was reduced by £31·5 million. The sum has now been refunded to ILEA; the balancing amounts will be recovered from other education authorities early in 1987-88.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the 1986-87 cash limit for class X vote 6 will therefore be increased by £31,500,000 from £9,246,000,000 to £9,277,500,000. Expenditure on this Vote is not classified as public expenditure and so there are no implications for the Reserve.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Banqueting and Dining Facilities

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Lord Privy Seal for how long the register of bookings for dining rooms and other banqueting facilities in the House of Commons is kept after the period to which it refers.

Mr. Biffen: The register is retained for one year only.

State Opening of Parliament (Photograph)

Sir Reginald Eyre asked the Lord Privy Seal whether there are plans for marking the occasion of the next Opening of Parliament with a photograph of the House in session; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: Yes. Following a resolution of the Services Committee in June, I understand that arrangements have been made for a photograph of the House in session to be taken between 2.30 and 3 pm on the afternoon of Wednesday 12 November, the day of the State Opening of Parliament. I am informed that the photograph will show the traditional view of the Chamber from a position behind the Serjeant at Arms Chair. It is intended that prints will be offered for sale to Members.

The attention of hon. Members will be drawn to these arrangements by notices in the *All Party Whip*.

ENERGY

British Gas (Flotation)

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all those companies involved in the flotation of British Gas giving, in each case, the level of fees agreed and the arrangements governing the level of such fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 13 June, at column *408*, which listed the firms giving advice to my Department on the sale of British Gas. A number of other firms are involved in the detailed preparations for the sale. It is not the Government's practice to publish the fees paid to individual firms on privatisation exercises, as these are commercially confidential.

Mersey Barrage

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress being made towards the construction of a Mersey barrage.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department and the Mersey Barrage Company have combined on an equal sharing basis to fund over £800,000 towards further studies into a Mersey barrage. I exchanged the relevant contract documents with the chairman of the Mersey Barrage Company at a ceremony in Liverpool on Monday 20 October.

The principal objective of the studies will be to assess whether there is any overriding impediment to the construction of the barrage and to select a preferred line. The consulting managers appointed by the company are now in process of inviting tenders and letting contracts for the study of these and related topics affecting the estuary.

Wiltshire (Oil Exploration)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the recent progress of exploration for oil in Wiltshire.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: There have been three recent exploration wells, two drilled in 1985, at Norton Ferris south-west of Warminster and at Netherhampton near Salisbury, and this year at Urchfont near Devizes. The results of the drilling are being evaluated.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action was taken by Her Britannic Majesty's Government's delegation to the recent conference of the International Red Cross at Geneva in connection with the expulsion of the South African Government's delegation.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom delegation emphasised that all states parties to the Geneva conventions had the right to attend the conference. When a vote was forced, the delegation voted against a motion to suspend the South African Government delegation for failing to observe the principles of the Red Cross and humanitarian law by pursuing its apartheid policy.

Visas

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officers were in post in embassies and consulates in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan to deal with the issuing of visas on 15 October.

Mr. Eggar: The number of officers dealing with long and short term visas in these posts on 15 October is as follows:

Bangladesh
Dhaka
1 First Secretary
3 Second Secretaries
17 Entry Clearance Officers

India
New Delhi
1 First Secretary
5 Entry Clearance Officers
Bombay
1 Second Secretary
7 Entry Clearance Officers
Madras
3 Entry Clearance Officers
Calcutta
1 Entry Clearance Officer

Pakistan
Islamabad
1 First Secretary
2 Second Secretaries
17 Entry Clearance Officers
Karachi
4 Entry Clearance Officers

NORTHERN IRELAND

Unemployed Families

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he can estimate the number of children in unemployed families for the latest date possible in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not available in the form requested. However, on 12 December 1984 the number of children under 16 years in unemployed families receiving supplementary benefit was 76,500.

Police Complaints Board

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he proposes to publish the triennial review report of the Police Complaints Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. King: Under article 11(6) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, the Police Complaints Board for Northern Ireland is required to keep under review the working of part II of the order—Complaints Against the Police, and to make to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland a report thereon at least once every three years after the coming into force of the article. The third review report of the Police Complaints Board for Northern Ireland has been made to me and as has been the practice with the two previous reports I have arranged for it to be published today and copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state (i) the gross financial resources in real terms available to the British Overseas Trade Board for each year since 1979 and (ii) the projections for the British Overseas Trade Board budget in real terms for the next five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following figures show gross and net expenditure by the British Overseas Trade Board in constant price terms:

£ million (September 1979)

Year	*Gross expenditure*	*Net expenditure*
1979-80	25·7	21·2
1980-81	19·8	16·1
1981-82	19·2	15·2
1982-83	20·8	16·3
1983-84	20·5	15·3
1984-85	[1]24·5	[1]18·7
1985-86	24·2	[2]17·1
1986-87	24·7	16·2

[1] Expenditure on publicity and promotion was transferred to the BOTB budget from the COI with effect from 1984-85. On a constant price basis the expenditure amounted to £1·5 million in 1984-85.

[2] Export Intelligence Service revenue was transferred to the BOTB budget from another DTI budget with effect from 1985-86. On a constant price basis this reduced net expenditure by £0·3 million in 1985-86.

The level of the BOTB budget for the years 1987-88 to 1989-90 is being reviewed as part of the 1986 Public Expenditure Survey which will be completed shortly.

Ault and Wiborg (Paint Factory)

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the efforts of Berger to take over the Ault and Wiborg paint factory at Perivale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about this proposed acquisition. They have been drawn to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading, who is currently examining the proposal.

Independent Television Companies

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations his Department has received suggesting technical, commercial and industrial advantage which would arise from a separation of the teletext service and subscription users group facilities from the Independent Television programme companies.

Mr. Butcher: My Department has not received any formal representations on this issue but is aware of the various suggestions which have been put forward concerning the use of teletext and subscription user group facilities.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the recent General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade made in Punta del Este.

Mr. Alan Clark: Contracting parties to the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) met at ministerial level in Punta del Este, Uruguay, on 15 to 20 September. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry presided over meetings of European Community Ministers during the conference and I represented the United Kingdom.

The contracting parties agreed unanimously to launch the eighth round of multilateral trade negotiations in GATT, to be known as the "Uruguay round". This launch is the result of three years' hard preparatory work. The success of the negotiations is vital to the preservation and strengthening of the world trading system.

The negotiations are scheduled to be completed within four years. The agenda will cover trade not only in goods but also in agricultural products and services.

The Ministerial declaration, a copy of which has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, provides for discussion of all matters to which the Government attach importance.

South Africa

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the voluntary ban on new investment in South Africa to which Her Majesty's Government agreed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government review meeting in August; and if he is taking any further action in this regard.

Mr. Channon: The member states of the EC have agreed that the measure will cover new direct investment in the RSA by natural or legal persons resident in any member state. In accordance with this and our undertaking at the Commonwealth Heads of Government review meeting, the British Government are taking action to dissuade United Kingdom firms from making new, direct investments and to ask all the companies concerned to comply fully with this measure.

Under the terms of the intergovernmental decision agreed by the member states of the EC, new direct investment includes new acquisitions of share and loan capital of South African companies, and also includes loans and capital injections through inter-company and branch/head office accounts.

Financial transactions and bank lending in support of normal trading activity are not included. Also excluded are investments in training, health and social sectors in line with the positive measures agreed in the EC last year and this.

I believe that British industry, which has repeatedly supported calls for fundamental social and political reform in South Africa, is ready to play its part in helping to bring this about by non-violent means. Given the extent of existing United Kingdom investment in South Africa, wholehearted co-operation by British companies with the voluntary ban on new investment should have considerable impact.

Meanwhile, if the South African Government were to take those steps for which we and our partners have called, in order to establish a process of dialogue across racial lines, we have made clear in the Commonwealth communiqué that we stand ready to review and, if appropriate, to rescind the measures we have adopted.

Diplomatic Documents (Sale)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to take action to prohibit the sale of diplomatic passports, visas and honourary consulships by British-based companies.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986, c. 34]: If the hon. Member will write to me, I shall consider the matter further.

SCOTLAND

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to spend more money on advertising the availability of cervical cancer screening in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: A Scottish Health Service planning council working group has been reviewing the cervical cytology service in Scotland and will shortly be submitting its report. We shall consider its recomendations very carefully including any views it may express on the need to advertise this service.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of cervical cancer screening in Scotland in the last financial year.

Mr. John MacKay: Figures on the total cost of cervical cancer screening in Scotland are not available centrally.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women have been screened for cervical cancer in Scotland in 1986.

Mr. John MacKay: 356,746 cervical smears were examined in Scotland in 1985, the latest year for which details are available. This figure includes repeat smears and does not represent the total number of women screened, for which figures are not available.

Strathclyde Island Population

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the island population in Strathclyde were born on the island on which they now live.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that the information is not available in the detail requested. The 1981 census of population asked for country of birth: the results showed that approximately 86 per cent. of the residents of islands in Strathclyde were born in Scotland.

Mental Illness

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were accommodated in mental illness hospitals in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is as follows:

Number of patients resident in mental illness hospitals in Scotland

	Numbers
1980	15,766
1981	16,103
1982	15,678
1983	15,631
1984	15,536

The figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was spent by each local authority in providing community care for those suffering from mental illness in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not held centrally.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women were admitted to mental illness hospitals in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is as follows:

Number of women admitted to mental illness hospitals in Scotland

	1st admission	*Re-admission*	*All admissions*
1980	5,456	8,804	14,348
1981	5,576	9,072	14,709
1982	5,212	8,182	13,475
1983	5,545	9,239	14,823
1984	5,411	9,402	15,000

The figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received concerning the extent and quality of community care for those patients discharged from mental illness hospitals.

Mr. John MacKay: Representations and inquiries are received from time to time on the general subject of community care, but there have been no recent representations relating specifically to the care of persons discharged from hospital following treatment for mental illness.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was made available by the Government for local authorities to provide for those suffering from mental illness in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: Rate support grant is not hypothecated to individual services; it is for local authorities to determine priorities within the resources available to them.

Mental Health Hospitals

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was spent on mental health hospitals in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is published annually in "Scottish Health Service Costs", copies of which are available in the Library.

Community Psychiatric Nursing Service

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received regarding the community psychiatric nursing service.

Mr. John MacKay: None.

Geriatric Care Beds

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many beds were available for geriatric care in *(a)* public and *(b)* private sector hospitals in Scotland in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of beds available for geriatric care in NHS hospitals as at 30 September in each of the years in question was as follows:

Year	*Number of Available Beds*
1980	9,767
1981	9,995
1982	10,146

Year	*Number of Available Beds*
1983	10,401
1984	10,700
1985	10,690

Comparable information for private sector hospitals is not centrally available.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the number of beds available for geriatric care in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Only one representation about the number of beds available for geriatric care in Scotland has been received in the last six months.

Scottish Institute for Adult and Continuing Education

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding his Department has provided for the Scottish Institute for Adult and Continuing Education for local development projects for the unemployed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Rifkind: None.

Adult Basic Education

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of funding by his Department for the Scottish adult basic education unit over each of the last three financial years; and what funds his Department is making available for adult basic education in the current year.

Mr. Rifkind: Grants offered to the Scottish adult basic education unit for each of the last three years were as follows:

Year	*Recurrent Grant*	*Supplementary Grant*
1983-84	£152,000	£7,000
1984-85	£160,650	—
1985-86	£165,500	—

From 1 April 1986 the work of the unit was integrated with that of the Scottish Community Education Council. The aggregate grant to the council for 1986-87 is £542,000, an overall increase of almost 4 per cent.

Physical Education

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the unit costs at Jordanhill Scottish school of physical education as compared with Dunfermline college; what further costs to public funds will arise following the integration of physical education students at the Cramond site; and what financial appraisals were carried out before he announced his decision on 17 July.

Mr. John MacKay: Centrally held unit cost figures for colleges of education are only available for complete institutions; for the 1985-86 financial year the net costs are £3,781 at Jordanhill college of education and £4,796 at Dunfermline college of physical education. I do not expect additional costs to the Exchequer to arise as a direct consequence of the integration of PE students at the Cramond site. The Scottish Education Department examined the financial consequences of various options for the future arrangements for PE training before my right hon. and learned Friend announced his decision on 17 July, in reaching which he had regard also to educational and accommodation factors.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage level of rate support grant made available to Inverclyde district council and Scotland overall in 1980 and at the latest date.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 October 1986]: Rate support grant for Inverclyde was 47·1 per cent. of relevant expenditure, including loan charges in 1980-81 and 27·4 per cent. of budgeted relevant expenditure in 1986-87. The corresponding figures for Scotland are 57·6 per cent. for 1980-81 and 47 per cent. for 1986-87. These figures do not include specific grants which are included in the calculation of aggregate Exchequer grants. The grant figures used for 1986-87 are based on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 4) Order 1985. No adjustment has been made for grant penalties, since they will be restored if authorities bring their expenditure down to guideline on outturn.

TRANSPORT

Safety Barriers (Motorways)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the types of safety fencing currently used on motorways and other trunk roads, particularly in central reservations; if he has any plans to introduce concrete barriers on motorways on an experimental basis in the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am generally satisfied with the types of safety fences used in the central reserves and verges of motorways and trunk roads and have no plans to introduce concrete barriers on an experimental basis. The Department has a programme of research and development of safety fences and barriers of different types, including concrete barriers. Satisfactory results may lead to changes in the future.

Aircraft (Disabled People)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the rules govening the proportion and seating position and seating positions of disabled passengers carried on scheduled flights.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is the Civil Aviation Authority which is responsible for air safety. There are no rules about the proportion of disabled passengers carried on scheduled flights. However, the CAA issues notices and other guidance to holders of air operators certificates on such matters as cabin crew training and the seating of handicappped and able-bodied passengers in relation to emergencies.

Aircraft (Engines)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has given any instructions to the Civil Aviation Authority with regard to extended twin-engined aircraft operations, about the guarantees required by the

Authority to ensure that data on precautionary and enforced shutdowns is accurate and includes all such shutdowns as required under CAP 513.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority is statutorily responsible for aviation safety and I do not give it instructions about it. The CAA's civil aviation publication 513 contains guidelines for the approval of extended range operations by United Kingdom-registered twin engined aircraft. Under article 85 of the Air Navigaton Order 1985 all precautionary and enforced shut-downs of engines on such aircraft must be reported to the authority. Civil Aviation publication 382 gives details of this procedure.

M1 (Contraflow Systems)

Mr. Walter Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many contraflow systems are working between London and Wakefield northbound and southbound; what are their locations; how long they will be operating; and on what estimated dates thay will be terminated.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

Site	*Location of contraflow*	*Start date*	*Programmed completion date*
J14-15	Northbound carriageway	1 October 1986	Mid November 1986
J22-23	Northbound carriageway	6 October 1986	25 November 1986
J27-28	Southbound carriageway	7 September 1986	16 November 1986
J31-33	Both carriageways	Mid October 1986	End of January 1987

Motorways (Maintenance)

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will issue guidelines to motorway contractors asking them to ensure that all motorways keep open at least two lanes during maintenance work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's standards for traffic management at motorway maintenance sites already ensure that on three-lane motorways at least two lanes in each direction are kept open wherever possible. Reductions to one lane are permitted only as a last resort, and then we try to keep them in off-peak periods. Reductions to one lane are sometimes necessary on two-lane motorways in order to provide a safety zone between the traffic stream and the work site.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the contracts and the number of personnel working on the M5 between junctions 21 and 23 on Saturday 25 October;

(2) if he or one of his Ministerial colleagues will visit the M5 between junctions 21 and 23; and if he will take urgent action to open the M5 to two lanes between these two junctions;

(3) if he will review the progress of maintenance work on the M5 between junctions 21 and 23; and who are the consulting engineers for this maintenance contract;

(4) on what basis his Department gave permission for the reduction of the M5 to one lane between junctions 21 and 22, and 22 and 23, on Saturday 25 October.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are three separate maintenance operations currently in progress on the M5 between junctions 21 and 23. The larger works are the replacement of a 2 km length of the wearing surface of the inside lane between junctions 21 and 22. In addition two smaller works are in progress, similarly replacing the wearing course at the approaches to the bridges over the rivers Brue and Huntspill.

In the interests of safety to both workmen and road users it is essential in each situation to close two lanes, leaving only one for traffic during working hours. The contractors are instructed, however, to open two lanes to traffic on ceasing work for the day. I am satisfied that the work, which is being supervised for my Department by Somerset county council, is being properly carried out. It is inevitable that there will be some delays to traffic. The contractors, Messrs Asfare and Roberts and Son, had 12 operatives including drivers working on the site on Saturday 25 October. This work is scheduled for completion by 5 November.

Westminster Bridge

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what criteria he used in determining that the present pedestrian crossing on Westminster bridge road opposite Belvedere road requires special approval for its retention;

(2) to whom the responsibility for switching on lights at the cycle facility on Westminster bridge road has been transferred following the abolition of the Greater London council;

(3) what criteria he used in deciding to instruct the London borough of Lambeth to close the space in the centre island of Westminster bridge road opposite Belvedere road;

(4) why he has instructed the traffic control systems unit to remove the cycle signals on Westminster bridge road at its junction with Belvedere road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All signalled pedestrian crossings in London and elsewhere that are not pelican crossings require my right hon. Friend's approval under the provisions of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981. My right hon. Friend is also responsible for all traffic light signals in London. There is a difficult design problem still to be resolved about the appropriate pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities at the southern end of Westminster bridge, where Lambeth borough council became the highway authority last April. This has to be worked out between my Department, the traffic control systems unit and Lambeth council. The sole consideration in the Department's actions since the original authorisation was given has been to ensure that lives are not put at risk by the present incomplete state of the facility.

A49 (Callow Hill)

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate, in respect of the A49 trunk road rebuilding contract currently being executed at Callow hill, Herefordshire, whether there have been any alterations to the specification to that set out in the tender documents against which the contract was let; and whether he anticipates the contract will be completed on the schedule called for in the contract.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been no major specification changes. There have been two minor changes to the method of working as set out in the tender documents:

(i) The rolled asphalt roadbase is being laid in three layers instead of two as originally specified. This enables earlier protection of the road sub-base to be provided.

(ii) The sequence of stockpiling excavated material has been modified to better suit the contractor's programme.

Both these variations have been agreed with the contractor with no increase in contractual cost. We cannot at this stage preclude the possibility of delay. No formal extension of contract has been granted so far.

Uttoxeter Bypass

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport why he will not earmark specific funds for the construction of a bypass of Uttoxeter in the near future.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is for Staffordshire county council, as the local highway authority, to make a bid for capital funding of a bypass of Uttoxeter when it is ready to proceed with a scheme. At that stage it would be considered for support along with other schemes as part of the annual transportation policies and programme process. As I indicated in my reply on 24 October, Staffordshire county council is not yet in a position to make such a bid.

Syrian Arab Airlines

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will ban flights to the United Kingdom by Syrian Arab Airlines.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Flights of Syrian Arab Airlines have currently been discontinued. The Government are considering whether any further formal steps should be taken.

Airport Rail Link, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further information he has received about the prospects for a rail link to Manchester international airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I understand that the parties concerned with the proposed rail link have recently made considerable progress on a possible cost-sharing arrangement, but I have yet to see exactly what is proposed.

Public Transport, London

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his practice to place a copy of the current working timetable of London Underground Ltd. and London Buses Ltd. in the Library.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. A wide range of current timetables for particular travel needs are issued by London Underground Ltd. and London Buses Ltd. and are readily available from bus and Underground stations. It is a matter for the Library to decide which of these it should acquire.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Banking Industry

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will place in the Library copies of the consultative papers he sent out to interested parties in the course of his discussions with the banking industry on the Leigh-Pemberton Committee's report, together with a list of the persons and institutions to which each of those papers was sent;

(2) what consultations he had with interested parties before he published in his White Paper on Banking Supervision, Cmnd. 9695, the proposal that only institutions with £5 million paid up equity be allowed to use the word bank as part of their name; and if he will list the persons and institutions to whom he addressed requests for comment on this point.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 19 July 1985, col. 289. The consultative papers in question were sent to all institutions at that time authorised to take deposits under the Banking Act 1979; to major United Kingdom accounting firms; to a number of United Kingdom Government Departments and supervisory authorities in other countries; and to the following bodies:

The British Bankers Association
The Committee of London Clearing Bankers
The Committee of Scottish Clearing Bankers
The Finance Houses Association
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland
The National Association of Security Dealers and Investment Managers
The Registry of Friendly Societies
The Securities and Investments Board
The Stock Exchange

The Bank of England also invited representations from any other interested individuals, institutions or representative bodies. All institutions were invited to comment on all matters in the consultative papers. Copies of the consultative papers were placed in the House Library at the time they were issued. The proposal that only institutions with £5 million paid-up equity capital be allowed to use the word "bank" as part of their name was made in the light of representations received following the issue of the consultative papers.

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list of the currently authorised deposit factors that fall outside the £5 million limit in paid-up equity which he now proposes to apply before allowing the use of the word "bank" as part of their name.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government intend to bring forward as soon as practicable legislation to implement the

proposals in the White Paper "Banking Supervision" (Cmnd. 9695), but I will write to my hon. Friend after the Bill is published.

Unemployment

Mrs. Clywd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to include a forecast of the level of unemployment in 1987-88 in his next Budget.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to include a forecast of future levels of unemployment in his next Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: No. It has not been the practice of this or previous Governments to publish forecasts of unemployment.

Chargeable Gains (Taxation)

Sir David Price asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the change in revenue in a full year if capital gains tax and corporation tax on chargeable gains were repealed and replaced by a charge to income tax and corporation tax, respectively, on gains computed in a like manner, on assets disposed of within one year of acquisition.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Revenue from capital gains tax and from corporation tax on chargeable gains would be reduced by more than 90 per cent.

Trustee Savings Bank

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the number and size of shareholdings in the Trustee Savings Bank immediately following flotation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Information is given in a press release, issued on 29 September by Lazard Brothers and Co. Ltd. on behalf of the Trustee Savings Bank central board, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Privatisation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost of pre-flotation publicity for each of the concerns privatised by the Government since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the latest take-up estimates for supplementary benefit and one-parent benefit.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people eligible for supplementary benefit do not claim it.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the estimated take-up of supplementary benefit derived from the 1983 family expenditure survey on the same basis as his reply of 30 November 1983, *Official Report*, column *532*, to the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold.)

Mr. Lyell: The figures for supplementary benefit are shown in the tables. These are derived from the 1983 family expenditure survey and are compared with the 1981 figures. Figures for one-parent benefit will be provided shortly.

Estimates of take-up of supplementary benefit for 1983

	Total likely to be entitled at any one time	*Proportion receiving benefit at that time*	*Number eligible but not receiving benefit*	*Estimated benefit unclaimed*	*Average weekly amount*
	Thousands	*Per cent.*	*Thousands*	*£ million per annum*	*£*
(i) Pensioners[1]	2,240	67	750	130	3·40
(ii) Non-pensioners—total[2]	3,140	83	550	430	15·30
(iii) Sick and disabled	240	80	50	30	10·30
(iv) Unemployed	2,250	81	420	350	15·90
(v) One-parent families not included in (iii) and (iv)	480	91	40	30	12·70
Total for all groups	5,380	76	1,290	570	8·40

[1] The estimates shown for pensioners are uncertain as explained under the heading "pensioners".
[2] This total is slightly greater than the sum of lines (iii), (iv) and (v) because it includes a small residual group of miscellaneous cases.

Estimates of take-up of supplementary benefit for 1981

	Total likely to be entitled at any one time	*Proportion receiving benefit at that time*	*Number eligible but not receiving benefit*	*Estimated benefit unclaimed*	*Average weekly amount*
	Thousands	*Per cent.*	*Thousands*	*£ million per annum*	*£*
(i) Pensioners[1]	2,480	67	810	210	5·00
(ii) Non-pensioners—total[2]	2,350	75	580	550	18·10
(iii) Sick and disabled	290	67	100	70	14·30
(iv) Unemployed	1,580	75	400	410	19·60
(v) One-parent families not included in (iii) and (iv)	400	88	50	40	15·30

	Total likely to be entitled at any one time	Proportion receiving benefit at that time	Number eligible but not receiving benefit	Estimated benefit unclaimed	Average weekly amount
	Thousands	Per cent.	Thousands	£ million per annum	£
Total for all groups	4,820	71	1,390	760	10·50

[1] The estimates shown for pensioners are uncertain as explained under the heading "pensioners".
[2] This total is slightly greater than the sum of lines (iii), (iv) and (v) because it includes a small residual group of miscellaneous cases.

Notes

1. Estimates of those with an unclaimed entitlement are based on DHSS analysis of income and other information recorded by respondents to the family expenditure survey (FES). The estimates of those in receipt are derived from the supplementary benefit annual and quarterly statistical enquiries.

2. The estimates relate only to people living in private households; people in institutions are not sampled by the FES.

3. Estimates are subject to sampling error, particularly those based on the FES.

4. Calculation of entitlement to supplementary benefit is based on the appropriate scale rates plus age-related heating additions and also in 1983 other heating additions which can be identified from FES information.

5. For 1981 calculation of entitlement included housing costs, except where the family would have been better off claiming housing rebates. For 1983 rent and rates are excluded to take account of the introduction of housing benefit which began in November 1982.

6. In 1981 FES participants were not asked about the amount of capital they had, only about income received from capital, and assumptions had to be made from this information about such capital holdings. In 1983 additional questions were asked about some forms of capital from which no income was received e.g. National Savings Certificates.

7. The estimates for 1983 exclude housing benefit supplement recipients and entitled non-recipients, for which no reliable estimates can be made because of the transitional arrangements which operated in several parts of the country following the introduction of housing benefit.

Comparisons between 1981 and 1983

In 1981 supplementary benefit requirements included rent and domestic rates, but ceased to do so with the introduction of housing benefit, partially from November 1982 and fully from April 1983. Supplementary benefit householders then received housing benefit to cover such housing costs. For this reason no direct comparison can be made between the 1981 and 1983 take-up estimates (see notes 5 and 7 to the tables).

Amounts of benefit unclaimed

Take up increases as the amount of entitlement increases. In 1983 the estimated proportion of benefit taken up was 89 per cent., and thus higher than the proportion of those entitled at any one time who actually claimed—76 per cent. The estimated proportion of benefit taken-up by the different groups was as follows:

Estimated proportion of benefit taken up

		per cent.
(i)	Pensioners	79
(ii)	Non-pensioners—total	90
(iii)	Sick and disabled	89
(iv)	Unemployed	89
(v)	One-parent families not included in (iii) and (iv)	97

Pensioners

The 1983 take-up estimate for pensioners is uncertain because of apparent deficiencies in the information obtained by FES from pensioner respondents. Comparison between figures based on FES data and the supplementary benefit annual and quarterly statistics indicate that a substantial number of FES pensioner respondents failed to report that they were receiving supplementary benefit. The FES figures have therefore been adjusted to make an allowance for this, but the adjustment must to some extent be speculative. The indications are that the FES figures fail to identify receipt of supplementary benefit by some 350,000 pensioners. For technical reasons, partly to do with lack of precision in such a complex survey as FES, the estimate of entitled non-recipients could not just be reduced by 350,000. Statisticians have adjusted the figures by reducing the estimated number of entitled non-recipients by 160,000. A technical note explaining this adjustment is being placed in the Library. There must be some doubt whether the estimate that 67 per cent. of pensioners were claiming 79 per cent. of their entitlement to supplementary benefit is correct. The indications are, however, that the average entitlement of non-claiming pensioners is small, £3·40 a week, including some 60 per cent. entitled to less than £3.

Non-pensioners

In 1983 it is estimated that at one time 83 per cent. of non-pensioners claimed 90 per cent. of their supplementary benefit entitlement. It is notable that 91 per cent. of one-parent families claimed 97 per cent. of their entitlement. It must be doubtful to what extent take-up by this group could be improved. The reasons for non take-up are complex. Analysis of the characteristics of unemployed people who had not taken up their entitlement to supplementary benefit shows that a high proportion, about 60 per cent., were living in other people's households, and in the majority the income of the household as a whole was well above supplementary benefit levels. Take-up increased to 90 per cent. for those unemployed more than three months. The information on which the take-up figures is based is given by FES respondents at one point of time. Those who have not taken up their entitlement at that point of time may do so at another time.

Measures to Promote Take-up

We continue to promote take-up by issuing a claim form to all retirement pensioners and widows, all unemployed claimants and all sickness benefit, invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance claimants. We co-operate at local level with well organised take-up campaigns mounted by local authorities. A postal claim form procedure has been introduced for all claimants to make it easier and more convenient for them to claim if they prefer not to be interviewed about their claim in a social security office or at home.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the latest figures for the take up of benefits by people aged 16 to 25 years.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 October 1986, c. *859*]: Estimates of the take-up of housing benefit and family income supplement for 16 to 25 year olds are not practicable because of the limited number of sample cases available in the family expenditure survey. However, take-up of supplementary benefit for this age group was 80 per cent. in 1983.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the percentage change in the amount paid out under regulation 9, Supplementary

Benefit Regulations to people in private residential care, from *(a)* 1979 to *(b)* the latest estimated figures that are available.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in the form requested. Annual supplementary benfit expenditure on residents in private and voluntary residential care homes and nursing homes who are not sponsored by a local authority has increased from £10 million in 1979 to £200 million in 1984, the last year for which information is available.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the number and percentage of households and persons in Scotland below, at, or up to 40 per cent. above supplementary benefit level in 1979, 1981 and 1983.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *73*]: Estimates are provided in the tables. All of these estimates are subject to sampling error, but the Scottish estimates of low income assessment units that are not receiving supplementary benefit are particularly prone to this statistical problem. This is because of the small number of sample cases available in the Family Expenditure Survey.

(Thousands)

	1979		*1981*		*1983*	
	No.	*Per cent.*	*No.*	*Per cent.*	*No.*	*Per cent.*
Number of supplementary benefit assessment units living in Scotland:						
In receipt of Supp B or HBS	290	12	300	12	370	14
Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 140 (includes RNR < 100)	380	16	510	20	660	25
Of which: not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 100	110	5	110	5	220	8
Number of persons living in Scotland:						
In receipt of Supp B or HBS	450	9	480	9	610	13
Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 140 (includes RNR < 100)	620	13	1,030	20	1,080	23
Of which: not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 100	170	4	160	3	300	6

Notes:

(i) The Scottish samples have been translated into population estimates using factors based on data for Great Britain as a whole. Since the Family Expenditure Survey response rate may differ from that for Great Britain as a whole and since the extent of the difference may vary from one year to another, it follows that Scottish estimates may be more vulnerable to grossing error than data for Great Britain as a whole. Taken together, these two sources of statistical error make both trends and levels in the Scottish estimates peculiarly difficult to interpret. These statistical problems will be considered as a part of the Low Income Technical Review.

(ii) The assumptions on which these estimates are based are the same as those contained in the "Low Income Families—1983" tables lodged in the Library of the House.

(iii) RNR = Relative net resources. For a full definition of this term see paragraphs 4 and 5 of "Low Income Families—1983".

(iv) HBS = housing benefit supplement.

(v) A supplementary benefit assessment unit is usually either a single person or a couple with their dependent children if they have any. Dependent children are those aged less than 16 or 19 if still in full-time non-advanced education.

(vi) "Other" is composed of single-parents, full-time students, full-time workers away from work on part or no pay, those of non-pension age not working and not seeking work and the sick and disabled.

(vii) Classifications by employment status and assessment type are mutually exclusive and non-additive.

(viii) "*" denotes a figure of less than 10,000.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were living in families below supplementary benefit level, on supplementary benefit, with incomes up to 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit, classified by both employment status and family type in 1983 on the latest basis and on a basis comparable with 1981 and 1979; and, in each case, what proportion of the total population in each category they represent.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Government were last advised on the prescription of industrial diseases by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We last received advice from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council earlier this year when it submitted its report on occupational lung cancer. Arrangements are being made to publish this report before the end of the year.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a decision has yet been reached about future stages of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome information campaign; and whether a television advertising campaign and a leaflet for households will be included.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 28 October.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the impact of the latest publicity campaign about acquired immune deficiency syndrome *(a)* generally and *(b)* on school-children.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) on 21 October at column *858*.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reduce the recommended interval for screening of women for cervical cancer from five years to three years; what would be the additional cost involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The recommended interval for cervical cancer screening is currently under review. We will announce the outcome of that review in due course.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reduce the period within which health authorities must instal computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening from two years to one year; what would be the additional cost involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: All health authorities in England have reported that they plan to implement computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening within the next seventeen months, that is no later than March 1988. This is an ambitious but realistic timetable. There would be severe practical difficulties, for example in staff recruitment and training, in any attempt at further acceleration of the timetable.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidance to procure the issue of the Lerner spatula within the National Health Service for cervical smear tests in place of the present Ayre spatula.

Mrs. Currie: We are aware of suggestions that various spatulas, one of which is the Lerner spatula, may be more effective than the Ayre spatula for taking cervical smears. We shall be asking the independent expert committee on gynaecological cytology for their advice.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to conclude an agreement with the manufacturers of Skoal bandits enabling a health warning to be printed on the containers of this product; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We hope to make an announcement shortly.

General Practice (Ancillary Staff)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has concerning the number of ancillary staff who are employed by doctors in general practice and who are the spouse or other relation of the doctor concerned;

(2) what information he has concerning the average reimbursement to doctors in general practice for ancillary staff to whom they are related; and how that average reimbursement compares to that which is paid on average for unrelated staff;

(3) if he will introduce legislation to ensure that equal payments are made for the ancillary staff of doctors in general practice regardless of whether they are relations of the doctor or not; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what recent discussions and correspondence have been entered into by his Department with interested parties concerning payments for ancillary workers who are related to doctors in general practice.

Mr. Newton: In 1984-85, the latest year for which figures are available, 282 related ancillary staff were employed at some stage during that year. The allowance currently payable to practitioners for employing related staff is £2,005 per annum, provided such staff work not less than 19 hours a week.

We have no centrally held information about hours worked by related ancillary staff, so it is difficult to make valid comparisons between the allowances paid to doctors in respect of their related and unrelated staff. However the fact that a "pay differential" exists is acknowledged. Indeed my predecessor met representatives of the General Medical Services Committee of the BMA and of the Doctors' Wives Association to discuss the matter on 19 February 1986. It was agreed that the Department, in conjunction with the GMSC, should draw up detailed proposals for reimbursing doctors for their related ancillary staff in the same way as unrelated staff, provided this could be done with reasonable safeguards against abuse and at no extra cost to the National Health Service. The GMSC and the Doctors' Wives Association accepted that proposals would be drawn up subject to these constraints. On 25 June 1986 officials wrote to the GMSC with proposals and we await their response.

Benefits and Allowances

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update to July 1986, at assumed July 1986 prices, the information on the value of benefits and allowances provided in the reply of 23 December 1982, *Official Report*, column *690*, to the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley).

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

	(a) Value in April 1955 money terms	*(b) Column (a) expressed at July 1986 prices*[1]	*(c) Value in July 1986 money terms*	*(d) Column (c) as Index Column (b) = 100*
Comparative levels of Social Security Benefits and Values of Tax Allowance to Basic Rate Taxpayers				
	£	£	£	
Married couple retirement pension (per week)	3·25	29·45	61·95	210·4
Single person tax allowance (per annum)[2]	274·00	2,482·50	2,335·00	94·1
Married couple tax allowance (per annum)[2]	374·00	3,388·55	3,655·00	107·9

Family Allowance/Child Benefit plus Child Tax Allowances (where appropriate) for a married couple plus 2 children aged under 11

	(a) Value in April 1955 money terms	(b) Column (a) expressed at July 1986 prices[1]	(c) Value in July 1986 money terms	(d) Column (c) as Index Column (b) = 100
In work (per week)[3]	1·11	10·06	14·20	141·2
Sick (per week)[4]	1·15[5]	10·44	14·20	136·0
Standard rate taxpayer	1·90[6]	17·21	14·20	82·5

[1] Based on the movement in the General Index of Retail Prices.
[2] Tax allowances available to all earners in 1955 comprised three elements; the personal allowance, national insurance relief and earned income relief, and all are included. Earned income relief is that for average earnings.
[3] In respect of average earnings of £10·87. Estimates of average earnings have been obtained by interpolation between October estimates, using the seasonally adjusted monthly index of average earnings (older series) published by the Department of Employment.
[4] Includes dependency allowance for children.
[5] Rates as at May 1955, when Sickness Benefit was increased. Real value at July 1986 (Column (b) of table) calculated from May 1955 base.
[6] Child tax allowance for the family illustrated would have been £200 per annum in 1955. It has been assumed that the family's income subject to tax is more than £200 below the top of the standard rate tax band.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will be introducing legislation to allow recipients of the mobility allowance to retain it beyond the age of 75 years.

Mr. Major: We have no present plans to do so.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications for mobility allowance were made in Scotland in 1985; of these how many were (i) granted and (ii) refused; of the claimants whose applications were refused how many subsequently appealed to the medical boards; in how many of these cases the original refusal was overturned; and in how many cases a refusal by a medical board was subsequently overturned by the Medical Appeals Tribunal.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many married women have now claimed invalid care allowance following his decision to extend it to them; what steps he is taking to ensure that all married women entitled to this benefit will have entered their claim before the end of the year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: A total of around 75,000 married and cohabiting women have claimed invalid care allowance, 60,000 of these claims have been made since my right hon. Friend's announcement on 23 June at column 21. We have sent individual letters to some 400,000 attendance allowance beneficiaries, asking them to pass on details of the extension to their carer. In addition there has been a national press campaign in newspapers and journals, including women's magazines. All the publicity has explained the ability to claim back to 22 December 1984 if the claim is received in the Department by 31 December 1986.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the level of the earnings limit for the invalid care allowance at April 1987 had it risen in line with changes to the retail price index since it was last increased in November 1982.

Mr. Major: £14·27.

British Council of Organisations of Disabled People

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assistance his Department gives to the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People; what his plans are for any future assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The British Council of Organisations of Disabled People is currently in receipt of a two year grant from the Department for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 of £9,000 and £10,000 respectively towards their central costs in establishing a development worker post. We have received an application from BCODP for a grant towards their international activities and towards a proposed meeting of the World Council of the Disabled People's International in the United Kingdom in 1987. These applications are currently being considered.

Local Authorities (Ministerial Meetings)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reconsider his practice of agreeing to meet only one representative of local authority social services committees in those local authorities where there is no overall majority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Our practice is to hold informal meetings about three times a year with Chairmen of Social Services Committees and Directors of Social Services with the aim of meeting representatives of every local authority over a period of two years. The invitations are addressed to chairmen and it is for them to decide if they wish to send a substitute. We value this opportunity to exchange views on personal social services issues with a wide range of authorities and we would not wish to make changes which would reduce their informality or prolong the rotation period beyond two years.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish from the 1983 family expenditure survey *(a)* the number and percentage of those eligible claiming certificated, and standard housing benefit and housing benefit supplement, *(b)* the total amount of benefit unclaimed and *(c)* the average weekly amount of benefit unclaimed broken down according to the different groups of beneficiaries.

Mr. Major: The 1983 family expenditure survey data are not regarded as reliable in respect of estimates of the take-up of housing benefit, as the survey was carried out in the same year as the changeover to the new scheme. The first take-up estimates of housing benefit are expected shortly, however, based on analysis of data from the 1984 family expenditure survey.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the rent and rate increase each year since 1982; by how much the housing benefits needs allowance has been increased in each of these years, taking account of his statement of 22nd October; how many persons have lost each year that the the former has exceeded the latter; what was the total saving; what was the average individual loss and how many lost more than: *(a)* £1, *(b)* £2, and *(c)* £3 per week.

Mr. Major: I think there may be a misunderstanding underlying the hon. Member's question. Increases in rent and rate levels are reflected in standard housing benefit entitlement in two ways. 60 per cent. of the claimant's actual rent and rates are reflected automatically in the benefit calculation, and this has never been altered. In addition, 40 per cent. of the national average rents and rates were reflected in the needs allowances under the traditional uprating formula which was used each year from November 1982 to November 1985 inclusive. For last July's interim uprating it was not possible to use the traditional formula, as was explained at the time, because the measurement period for the uprating did not include the month of April when rents and rates normally increase. The approach used for next April's uprating, together with details of the effects, were explained fully in my right hon. Friend's statement to the House, and subsequent exchanges, on 22 October.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish from the 1983 family expenditure survey *(a)* the number of those eligible claiming family income supplement, *(b)* the total amount of benefit unclaimed and *(c)* the average weekly amount of benefit unclaimed broken down into one and two parent families.

Mr. Major: An analysis of the data derived from the 1983 and 1984 family expenditure surveys in relation to take-up of family income supplement is almost complete. I hope to announce the results very shortly.

Heart Pacemakers

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will ask for a report from Leeds western health authority on the provision of heart pacemakers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will ask for a report from the Yorkshire regional health authority on the provision of heart pacemakers in Leeds Western district health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: This is a matter for the Yorkshire regional health authority. May I suggest therefore that the hon. Member writes to the regional health authority chairman for the information he requires.

NHS (Beds)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of beds available in the National Health Service at the present time; and how this compares with 1979.

Mrs. Currie: In 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally, the average daily number of available beds in National Health Service hospitals in England was 325,487. The corresponding figure for 1979 was 361,670. The number of in-patient cases treated per available bed per year increased from 14·9 to 19·5 between 1979 and 1985. The number of in-patient cases treated in 1979 was 5,400,120 compared with 6,353,812 in 1985.

J. E. Hanger and Co. (Dispute)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list and give the dates of approaches made by Ministers and officials respectively, to J. E. Hanger and Co. since 16 September about the current lock-out, together with the company's response in each case.

Mr. Major: Under my direction officials in the Department's headquarters and in the Department's artificial limb and appliance centres have been in daily contact with J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. centrally and locally since the dispute at the Roehampton works began. Oral and written requests have been put to the management of the company from the first week enquiring what action the company were taking to maintain supply. Hanger management has not been prepared to go further than to make general assurances that they were making strenuous efforts to maintain the service.

As far as patients are concerned, however, co-operation between the Department's artificial limb and appliance centre staff and local Hanger branch management is very good. All urgent cases drawn to the attention of the company have been and are being dealt with expeditiously.

Low Income Families

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will update in the *Official Report* the information on the income level of poorer households provided in his reply of 24 October 1983 to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) *Official Report* column *51*, as soon as the 1983 low income families tables are placed in the Library;

(2) how many people in Scotland in 1983 were (i) below, (ii) at and (iii) up to 140 per cent. of the supplementary benefit level on the latest basis and on a basis comparable with 1979 and 1981; what percentage of the total population they represent in each case; what his estimate is of the number of children living in such households in each case; and what percentage of total children they represent in each case;

(3) how many children in Scotland were living in families below supplementary benefit level, on supplementary benefit, and with incomes up to 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit level, classified by employment status; whether they were in one or two parent families in 1983 on the latest basis and on a basis comparable with 1981 and 1979; and what proportion these children made up of the total number of children.

Mr. Major: [*pursuant to his replies*, 17 March 1986 c *65*, and 21 July 1986 c *79-80* and c *89*]: Estimates are provided in the tables. All of these estimates are subject to sampling error, but the Scottish estimates of low income assessment units that are not receiving supplementary benefit are particularly prone to this statistical problem. This is because of the small number of sample cases available in the family expenditure survey.

Table 1
Numbers of supplementary benefit assessment units (with or without children):—

thousands

1983	*Number of Units*	*per cent. of all Units*	*Number of children*
Great Britain			
In receipt of Supp B or HBS	3,640	13	1,630
Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 140 (includes RNR < 100)	5,740	21	2,250
of which: Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 100	1,880	7	400
Scotland			
In receipt of Supp B or HBS	370	14	180
Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 140 (includes RNR < 100)	660	25	220
of which: Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 100	220	8	40

Table 2
Number of persons living in Scotland

thousands

	1979	*per cent. of total population*	*1981*	*per cent. of total population*	*1983*	*per cent. of total population*
In receipt of Supp B or HBS	450	9	480	9	610	13
Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 140 (includes RNR < 100)	620	13	1,030	20	1,080	23
of which: Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 100)	170	4	160	3	300	6

Table 3
Number of children living in supplementary benefit assessment units in Scotland:-

thousands

	Where the head is:					
	In full-time work	*Unemployed*	*Other*	*1 parent family*	*one of a couple*	*percentage of all children*
1979						
In receipt of Supp B or HBS	—	60	50	n/a	n/a	8
Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 140 (includes RNR < 100)	40	20	40	20	80	8
Of which: Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 100	*	*	20	10	10	2
1981						
In receipt of Supp B or HBS	—	90	60	n/a	n/a	11
Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 140 (includes RNR < 100)	200	40	50	40	250	21
Of which: Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 100	*	10	*	*	10	1
1983						
In receipt of Supp B or HBS	—	90	90	80	80	16
Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 140 (includes RNR < 100)	160	20	40	20	190	20
Of which: Not in receipt of Supp B or HBS with RNR < 100	30	10	*	*	30	3

Notes:

(i) The Scottish samples have been translated into population estimates using factors based on data for Great Britain as a whole. Since the Family Expenditure Survey response rate may differ from that for Great Britain as a whole and since the extent of the difference may vary from one year to another, it follows that Scottish estimates may be more vulnerable to grossing error than data for Great Britain as a whole. Taken together, these two sources of statistical error make both trends and levels in the Scottish estimates peculiarly difficult to interpret. These statistical problems will be considered as a part of the Low Income Technical Review.

(ii) The assumptions on which these estimates are based are the same as those contained in the "Low Income Families—1983" tables lodged in the Library of the House.

(iii) RNR = relative net resources. For a full definition of this term see paragraphs 4 and 5 of "Low Income Families—1983".
(iv) HBS = housing benefit supplement.
(v) A supplementary benefit assessment unit is usually either a single person or a couple with their dependent children if they have any. Dependent children are those aged less than 16 or 16 to 19 if still in full-time non-advanced education.
(vi) "Other" is composed of single-parents, full-time students, full-time workers away from work on part or no sick pay, those of non-pension age not working and not seeking work and the sick and disabled.
(vii) Classifications by employment status and assessment type are mutually exclusive and non-additive.
(viii) "—" denotes a figure of less than 10,000.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table showing for 1983 *(a)* the numbers of families with one, two, three, four or more children living below, at, and up to 140 per cent. of the supplementary benefit level on the latest basis and a basis comparable with 1981 and 1979, *(b)* how many of these families were in work or out of work and *(c)* the total number of families with one, two, three, four or more children, on the same basis as his reply of 16 May 1985 to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, column *224*;

(2) if he will provide a breakdown from the low income families 1983 table of the main reasons for people falling below the supplementary benefit level on the same basis as his reply of 14 December 1983 to the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) *Official Report*, column *517*;

(3) how many children were living in families below supplementary benefit level, on supplementary benefit, with incomes up to 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit level, classified by employment status, and whether they were in one or two-parent families in 1983 on the latest basis and on a basis comparable with 1981 and 1979; and what proportion these children make up of the total number of children.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986, c. *665-66*]: Estimates are provided in the tables. Amongst those supplementary benefit assessment units that are not in receipt of supplementary benefit with incomes below supplementary benefit level, the majority of those that are entitled to supplementary benefit or housing benefit supplement are pensioners failing to claim small amounts. Of the non pensioner minority within this group a significant number are living in wider relatively well-off households. Of those that are in full time work or self employed, 140,000 are single adults, 40,000 are couples without children and 110,000 are couples with children. Of these couples with children, some 60,000 would not have incomes below supplementary benefit level if they had claimed their entitlement to family income supplement. Those with capital in excess of the prescribed supplementary benefit limit have at least £3,000 available to them and thus have the means of support for day to day living. About 80 per cent. of those unoccupied for no apparent reason and who are required to be available for work are single persons without children.

Number of Supplementary Benefit Assessment Units with children in Great Britain

	Thousands	*Thousands*
1979	*1 or 2 children*[1]	*3 or more children*
In receipt of Supp B		
Head in FTW	—	—
Head not in work	360	120
Not in receipt of Supp B with RNR < 100		
Head in FTW	70	20
Head not in work	60	10
Not in receipt of Supp B with RNR < 140		
Head in FTW	310	170
Head not in work	180	40

1981	*1 child*	*2 children*	*3 children*	*4+ children*
In receipt of Supp B				
Head in FTW	—	—	—	—
Head not in work	340	260	130	70
Not in receipt of Supp B with RNR < 100				
Head in FTW	30	60	30	10
Head not in work	60	40	20	10
Not in receipt of Supp B with RNR < 140				
Head in FTW	150	320	140	70
Head not in work	50	70	40	20

1983				
In receipt of Supp B				
Head in FTW	—	—	—	—
Head not in work	420	320	140	70
Not in receipt of Supp B with RNR < 100				

	Thousands		Thousands	
Head in FTW	30	30	30	20
Head not in work	40	30	10	10
Not in receipt of Supp B with RNR < 140				
Head in FTW	220	340	200	70
Head not in work	100	70	20	20

[1] A more detailed sub-classification by numbers of children cannot be provided without incurring excessive costs.

Total number of families with children in Great Britain

	1 child	2 children	3 children	4+ children
1979	2,875	2,978	993	344
1981	2,920	2,970	940	300
1983	2,900	2,900	880	270

Supplementary Benefit Assessment Units not in receipt of supplementary benefit with incomes below supplementary benefit level analysed by benefit entitlement status—Great Britain 1983

	Thousands
Total number apparently entitled to supplementary benefit or housing benefit supplement but not claiming:	1,120
Total whose income is below supplementary benefit level but who are not eligible:	
(i) Full-time work or self employed	290
(ii) Those with capital in excess of prescribed limits	200
(iii) Those unoccupied for no apparent reason who are required to be available for work	270

Number of children living in Supplementary Benefit Assessment Units In Great Britain

Thousands

	Where the head is						
	In full-time work	Unemployed	Sick or disabled	Other	One parent	One of a couple	Percentage of all children
1979							
In receipt of Supplementary Benefit	—	340	100	420	580	310	7
Not in receipt of Supplementary Benefit with RNR < 100	140	40	20	90	60	230	2
Not in receipt of Supplementary Benefit with RNR < 140	960	120	140	250	200	1,280	11
1981							
In receipt of Supplementary Benefit	—	650	90	420	620	580	9
Not in receipt of Supplementary Benefit with RNR < 100	210	150	30	140	110	420	4
Not in receipt of Supplementary Benefit with RNR < 140	1,460	390	210	350	300	2,120	19
1983							
In receipt of Supplementary Benefit	—	980	90	540	770	860	13
Not in receipt of Supplementary Benefit with RNR < 100	160	120	20	100	50	350	3
Not in receipt of Supplementary Benefit with RNR < 140	1,440	310	130	360	210	2,040	18

Notes:

(i) The assumptions on which these estimates are based are the same as those contained in the "Low Income Families—1983" tables lodged in the Library of the House. Due to rounding the sum of the components may not equal the total.

(ii) RNR = relative net resources. For a full definition of this term see paragraphs 4 and 5 of the notes of "Low Income Families—1983".

(iii) FTW = full-time work.

(iv) A supplementary benefit assessment unit is usually either a single person or a couple with their dependent children if they have any. Dependent children are those aged less than 16 or 16 to 19 if still in full-time non-advanced education.

(v) Classification by employment status and assessment unit are mutually exclusive and non-additive.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he can estimate, following the publication of the low income family tables for 1983, to what level *(a)* family income supplement and *(b)* child benefit would need to be raised to ensure that all working families with children have an income above the supplementary benefit entitlement, on the same basis as his reply of 30 July 1984 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) *Official Report*, column *109*.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *79-80*]: In 1983, around 110,000 full time working assessment units with children has net resources below

supplementary benefit level. Some 60,000 of these had an unclaimed entitlement to family income supplement or standard housing benefit. In most cases claim to these entitlements would have raised their net resources above supplementary benefit level. If all entitlements to family income supplement and housing benefit were claimed, then it would be possible to raise the net resources of almost 90 per cent. of the total number of assessment units to above the supplementary benefit level by *(a)* increasing child benefit by 40 per cent. or *(b)* increasing the family income supplement prescribed amounts by 30 per cent. If however claimed entitlements to family income supplement and housing benefit remained at present proportions then raising the family income supplement prescribed amounts would have only a negligible effect on the numbers below supplementary benefit level. Raising child benefit by 200 per cent. would raise the net resources of 90 per cent. of assessment units above supplementary benefit levels.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit in each of the 36 metropolitan districts for each year from 1979 to 1986;

(2) if he will give the numbers receiving supplementary benefits per thousand head of population in each of the 36 metropolitan districts for each year from 1979 to 1986;

(3) if he will list the numbers of children in each of the 36 metropolitan districts who are dependent upon supplementary benefit claimants for each year from 1979 to 1986;

(4) if he will list the numbers of children dependent upon people receiving supplementary benefit per thousand head of population in each of the metropolitan districts for each year from 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to the reply*, 22 October 1986, c. *903-4*]: Information to enable a breakdown of supplementary benefit cases by metropolitan district area began to be collected only in 1981. The available information is given in the four tables:

Table 1. Claimants receiving supplementary benefit
Estimated numbers (thousands)

Metropolitan districts	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Greater Manchester					
Bolton	20	24	24	27	25
Bury	11	12	13	13	12
Manchester	58	67	68	82	77
Oldham	15	17	19	21	21
Rochdale	17	20	21	21	21
Salford	23	27	27	31	31
Stockport	16	19	20	23	21
Tameside	17	20	20	22	23
Trafford	14	16	17	17	16
Wigan	20	24	26	28	30
Merseyside					
Knowsley	23	26	27	26	28
Liverpool	70	79	83	89	89
St. Helens	14	16	17	19	18
Sefton	24	27	28	30	32
Wirral	28	33	35	37	38
South Yorkshire					
Barnsley	14	16	18	21	20
Doncaster	19	23	25	29	28
Rotherham	17	21	23	28	25
Sheffield	46	55	60	64	64
Tyne and Wear					
Gateshead	20	23	25	27	26
Newcastle	30	33	37	38	40
North Tyneside	17	20	20	24	23
South Tyneside	17	20	21	22	24
Sunderland	28	34	35	40	40
West Midlands					
Birmingham	98	116	124	140	137
Coventry	27	33	35	37	38
Dudley	21	26	27	29	30
Sandwell	28	36	39	39	39
Solihull	9	11	13	10	13
Walsall	20	26	28	28	28
Wolverhampton	23	29	31	32	34
West Yorkshire					
Bradford	38	44	47	47	49
Calderdale	13	15	16	17	16
Kirklees	24	27	30	31	29
Leeds	59	66	68	69	69
Wakefield	19	22	23	25	26

Table 2. Claimants receiving supplementary benefit per 1,000 head of population
Estimated numbers

Metropolitan districts	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Greater Manchester					
Bolton	78	90	93	102	96
Bury	60	70	72	78	72
Manchester	125	145	150	180	171
Oldham	69	78	86	96	98
Rochdale	83	94	101	102	103
Salford	94	110	111	127	131
Stockport	55	64	69	78	72
Tameside	78	93	92	104	106
Trafford	63	72	77	80	72
Wigan	66	78	84	93	97
Merseyside					
Knowsley	130	149	156	156	169
Liverpool	136	154	164	179	182
St. Helens	75	86	92	102	94
Sefton	79	91	93	100	107
Wirral	83	97	102	110	113
South Yorkshire					
Barnsley	62	72	78	92	92
Doncaster	65	81	89	95	99
Rotherham	68	81	87	100	98
Sheffield	85	101	111	119	118
Tyne and Wear					
Gateshead	95	110	121	129	127
Newcastle	106	118	130	136	143
North Tyneside	84	99	105	121	119
South Tyneside	107	124	135	142	155
Sunderland	93	114	118	132	134
West Midlands					
Birmingham	96	114	122	139	136
Coventry	85	103	111	119	122
Dudley	69	85	91	97	99
Sandwell	89	117	127	128	130
Solihull	45	58	67	50	66
Walsall	75	97	104	106	107
Wolverhampton	91	114	121	125	135
West Yorkshire					
Bradford	81	95	100	102	105
Calderdale	70	80	83	87	83
Kirklees	63	73	79	82	77
Leeds	83	92	96	97	97
Wakefield	61	70	73	80	84

Table 3. Dependants (excluding partners) of supplementary benefit claimants

Estimated numbers (thousands)

Metropolitan districts	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Greater Manchester					
Bolton	9	11	12	14	13
Bury	4	5	6	6	5
Manchester	27	32	33	39	40
Oldham	7	9	12	12	13
Rochdale	9	11	11	11	12
Salford	11	11	11	13	14
Stockport	6	7	8	8	9
Tameside	6	9	9	9	9
Trafford	5	7	7	6	8
Wigan	7	11	12	13	15
Merseyside					
Knowsley	15	18	18	17	18
Liverpool	31	36	38	43	40
St. Helens	6	7	9	10	9
Sefton	10	10	13	14	14
Wirral	13	16	18	17	18
South Yorkshire					
Barnsley	6	7	7	9	10
Doncaster	9	11	12	14	14
Rotherham	8	10	11	12	13
Sheffield	14	18	20	21	23
Tyne and Wear					
Gateshead	8	8	10	10	10
Newcastle	11	13	14	16	16
North Tyneside	6	8	8	8	9
South Tyneside	6	7	8	10	11
Sunderland	15	18	17	20	21
West Midlands					
Birmingham	49	60	70	82	78
Coventry	14	14	17	16	18
Dudley	8	10	11	13	14
Sandwell	10	15	17	19	20
Solihull	6	7	7	5	7
Walsall	11	13	17	17	15
Wolverhampton	12	14	16	18	18
West Yorkshire					
Bradford	19	26	30	28	29
Calderdale	5	7	8	8	8
Kirklees	12	15	15	16	15
Leeds	24	29	29	28	32
Wakefield	8	9	11	11	14

Table 4. Dependants (excluding partners) of supplementary benefit claimants per thousand head of population

Estimated

Metropolitan districts	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Greater Manchester					
Bolton	35	42	44	54	50
Bury	22	27	32	33	32
Manchester	58	70	71	86	89
Oldham	30	40	54	53	57
Rochdale	43	53	52	56	56
Salford	43	47	46	56	59
Stockport	21	25	29	28	31
Tameside	27	42	40	41	42
Trafford	24	32	34	29	35
Wigan	24	36	39	42	48
Merseyside					
Knowsley	86	106	106	102	108
Liverpool	61	71	76	86	82
St. Helens	31	37	45	54	49
Sefton	33	34	44	47	46
Wirral	39	47	52	49	54
South Yorkshire					
Barnsley	25	29	30	42	43
Doncaster	29	37	41	47	50
Rotherham	34	41	42	49	53
Sheffield	26	33	37	39	42
Tyne and Wear					
Gateshead	36	39	49	49	47
Newcastle	37	47	51	56	58
North Tyneside	32	39	42	39	45
South Tyneside	35	43	51	65	73
Sunderland	49	61	57	68	69
West Midlands					
Birmingham	48	58	69	82	77
Coventry	45	44	53	50	59
Dudley	25	34	38	43	45
Sandwell	33	50	54	62	67
Solihull	30	37	35	26	35
Walsall	41	50	63	65	57
Wolverhampton	48	53	61	73	70
West Yorkshire					
Bradford	42	56	65	61	62
Calderdale	28	37	41	41	44
Kirklees	32	39	39	43	39
Leeds	34	40	41	40	45
Wakefield	27	29	37	36	44

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farmers (Radiation Compensation)

33. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on compensation to hill farmers in Cumbria for losses arising from the Chernobyl incident.

35. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding compensation of farmers for losses incurred as a result of restrictions on the movement, sale and slaughter of sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Folllowing discussions with industry representatives, we have introduced three schemes of compensation for sheep producers in the areas in which movement and slaughter restrictions have been imposed. The first scheme helps producers of those finished lambs which, through being held back, were subsequently rejected for variable premium on the ground of over-fatness when the areas were released from restrictions. The second scheme compensates producers for their market price losses on marked sheep released from the designated areas which were presented at store markets and sales, as well as liveweight certification centres. The third scheme provides assistance towards the direct costs incurred by producers of finished lambs and cast ewes. The Government consider that these compensation arrangements represent a fair and balanced response to the needs of sheep producers whose marketing, prices and costs have been affected by the restrictions.

Butter

2. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much butter is currently stored in intervention in the United Kingdom; and what percentage change this represents over 1985.

Mr. Gummer: There were 267,675 tonnes of butter in intervention in the United Kingdom on 29 October, representing a 32 per cent. increase over the same week in 1985.

Agricultural Surpluses

3. **Mr. Strang** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has submitted any proposals to the European Commission to reduce the cost to the European community of surplus agricultural production.

Mr. Jopling: I have consistently argued for policies which would restrain the production and budgetary cost of surpluses within the European Community.

23. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost of European Economic Community agricultural surpluses for 1986-87; and what was the comparable cost for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Jopling: The 1986 Community budget and the 1987 draft budget provide 14,048 mecu and 14,488 mecu respectively for expenditure on public storage and disposal of those products which are in structural surplus (cereals, sugar, wine, beef and milk products). The comparable figures for 1984 and 1985 were 11,432 mecu and 12,464 mecu respectively.

Chernobyl Disaster

12. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any information on the implications for agriculture of the Chernobyl disaster from his opposite number in the Soviet Union and on any lessons to be learnt, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Cereals

13. **Miss Maynard** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the likely cereal harvest in 1986.

41. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the 1986 cereal harvest.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo).

16. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implementation of the cereal co-responsibility levy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

21. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the percentage change in the cereal prices received by farmers in Germany, France and United Kingdom, respectively in the current year as compared with 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage change in market prices between July—September 1985 and July—September 1986.

	United Kingdom	*France*	*Germany*
Breadmaking Wheat	−7·0	+5·9	−3·0
Feed Wheat	+3·4	N/A	−2·8
Feed Barley	+3·5	+4·5	−4·0
Malting Barley	+13·1	N/A	+8·2
Oats	+21·0	N/A	−1·0

Ex-farm price data are not available. The percentage above are based on average market prices derived from prices supplied by member states to the European Commission. The 1986 -87 market prices used are inclusive of co-responsibility levy.

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications of the cereals co-responsibility levy for the economic viability of *(a)* farms and *(b)* grain merchants.

Mr. Jopling: As the levy has been in force for only four months I am reluctant to attempt generalisations about its effect. Farmers themselves are not normally liable to pay the levy, which is collected at the stage of processing, export, or sale into intervention. But it was designed to reduce the incentive to cereals production for all but the smallest farmers. The distortions and complications which it threatens in other areas — especially for grain merchants and users—is one reason why I have always favoured achieving this objective through direct action on prices.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

14. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress on his priorities as President of the Council of Ministers.

27. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress on his priorities as President of the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Jopling: My priority as president is the expeditious handling of the Commission's proposals for CAP reform, particularly of the beef and dairy regimes, and of measures which contribute to the completion of the internal market.

25. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the decisions taken by the Council of Agriculture Ministers since he assumed the Presidency.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) on 16 July, at column 555, and to press notices issued by my Department on 17 September and 16 October, recording the outcome of the September and October Agriculture Councils respectively, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

British Food (Marketing)

15. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve the marketing of British food.

Mr. Gummer: The Government established Food From Britain in 1983 to improve the marketing of British food. We are providing some £14 million to FFB during the five years to 1987-88 and financial commitments have now

been made by the food and agricultural industries. Provided their contributions reach at least £3 million in 1988-89, further Government funds will be available until 1990-91. FFB has made an encouraging start, and I believe that it will continue to build on its initial successes.

Advisory Services

17. **Dr. Marek** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what revenue he now expects to be yielded by charging for advisory services.

Mr. Jopling: As stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 12 June 1986, at column 284, new charges for ADAS advisory and promotional work are expected to raise at least £5 million in 1987-88. I have every confidence that this target can be achieved.

Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance

18. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend the Minister last met the president of the Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance on 25 October 1985. I was present at this year's joint annual luncheon on 24 October and will be meeting the president on 13 November.

Radiation Levels

19. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any arrangements have been introduced for the monitoring of radiation in soft fruits since the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Gummer: Soft fruits have been included in this Department's intensive testing programme carried out since the Chernobyl incident. The results have been published regularly and are available in the Library of the House. These show levels of radioactivity to be very low and of no cause for concern.

28. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what radiation detection equipment is held by his Department for the measurement of levels of radiation in a Chernobyl-type disaster.

Mr. Gummer: The Ministry's laboratories at Lowestoft and Weybridge are equipped to the highest international standards for radiological analysis. Most measurements made following the Chernobyl accident have employed high resolution solid state gamma spectrometry. Radiochemical separation followed by low-level alpha or beta counting is undertaken for radionuclides which are not gamma emitters.

The Ministry is undertaking monitoring of live animals and agricultural materials in field conditions using portable single channel scintillation rate meters supplied to Ministry specifications.

31. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to simplify the terms used for the measurement of radiation levels in food and livestock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No. My Department uses the international system of units (SI units) in common with other United Kingdom and international organisations. This system of units is unambiguously understood throughout the world and introduction of new units would create confusion. The amount of radioactivity present is measured in bequerels (Bq). One bequerel is equivalent to one radioactive disintegration per second. Concentrations of radioactivity in food and livestock are expressed in units of bequerels per kilogram (abbreviated to Bq/kg) in solids or bequerels per litre (abbreviated Bq/l) in liquids.

Food Additives

20. **Mr. Pike** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had with food manufacturers about the inclusion of additives in food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I and my officials regularly receive representations from a wide range of persons and organisations interested in the use of food additives. My right hon. Friend the Minister spoke at the annual luncheon of the Food and Drink Federation on 18 September. I have had no discussions with food manufacturers on this subject.

Land (Set Aside Schemes)

22. **Mr. Latham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on progress regarding set aside schemes for land, designed to curtail agricultural surpluses.

Mr. Gummer: I put forward a paper on the diversion of land from cereals for discussion at the recent informal meeting of Community Agriculture Ministers. I was encouraged by the constructive and thoughtful reception that it received. I hope that discussion of the issues which it raises will now be continued within the Community.

Confectionery

24. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated value of United Kingdom produced confectionery for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department does not collect this information. However, the Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance publishes estimates of the value of United Kingdom manufacturers' home sales and exports. The sum of these will overstate the value of production, which is not published, to the extent that United Kingdom manufacturers merchant imported confectionery.

	Home Sales £1 million	*Exports £ million*
1979	1,082	177
1980	1,182	176
1981	1,249	–
1982	1,346	175
1983	1,412	201
1984	1,543	224
1985	1,702	234

Fisheries Policy

26. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the outcome of EEC Council of Fisheries Ministers meetings held during the summer recess.

Mr. Jopling: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) earlier today.

38. **Mr. Beith** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in reconsidering the effect of the proposed 90mm mesh size on inshore fisheries.

Mr. Gummer: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) earlier today.

Agricultural Land

29. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the annual loss of all grades of agricultural land to any non-agricultural or non-forestry development.

Mr. Donald Thompson: For England, the average annual loss of agricultural land to non-agricultural or non-forestry development for the five-year period ending June 1985 is estimated to be 14,600 hectares (36,000 acres).

Farm Wardens

30. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what role farm wardens would play in the case of an incident in the United Kingdom similar to that which occurred at Chernobyl; and what training they are given.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Farm wardens are part of my Department's wartime organisation and there are no plans at present to appoint them for other purposes.

32. **Sir Nicholas Bonsor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of the lessons of the Chernobyl disaster, he proposes to increase the number of farm wardens and to enhance their training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Farm wardens are part of my Department's wartime organisation. There are no plans at present to appoint them for other purposes or to increases the numbers already estimated to be required in time of war.

Beef Variable Premium Scheme

34. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the beef variable premium scheme.

Mr. Gummer: As part of this year's price fixing decisions, the Council of Ministers agreed that the European Commission's proposals for reforming the beef regime should be studied further with a view to decisions being taken by 31 December 1986. The regulations governing the beef variable premium scheme were accordingly extended to that date. The Commission's proposal for changes to the beef regime include a Community-wide premium scheme which is intended to replace the variable premium. The Commission has, however, undertaken to propose a continuation of the variable premium scheme, taking account of the budgetary situation, if changes to the regime are not agreed in time be brought into effect by the end of the year. Discussions on the proposals are continuing and we are pressing the merits of a slaughter premium scheme in that context.

Milk Quotas

36. **Mr. Knox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the operation of milk quotas.

Mr. Gummer: Dairy farmers in the United Kingdom have generally adapted well to the milk quota system. The rising trend in milk production in the European Community has been checked, but there is still a substantial excess of supply over demand. Reductions in the level of quota were agreed earlier this year, and the Council of Ministers is now considering ways to tighten up the operation of the quota system to make it more effective.

Straw Burning

37. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with current measures to reduce the adverse impact of straw burning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. Although there have been isolated exceptions, the indications are that there has been less careless or inconsiderate burning of straw during this year's harvest season. I believe that a combination of strengthened byelaws, the publicity campaign mounted by my Department, and the code of practice issued by the National Farmers Union have contributed greatly to this improvement in the situation. Moreover, as the results of our continuing research and development work on alternative methods of disposal have been made known to the industry, an increasing number of farmers have been able to avoid straw and stubble burning altogether. These are encouraging trends, but we shall keep the matter under review.

Intervention Costs

39. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount spent on intervention in 1985-86; and what proportion of this was recovered from European funds.

Mr. Jopling: United Kingdom expenditure on all aspects of intervention was £823 million net of recovery of VAT and of sales receipts, some of which will have related to produce purchased in earlier years, of £163 million. The Community does not meet the cost of purchases, but does contribute towards the financing cost of the stocks held, losses on sale, devaluation of stocks and storage and related costs. These contributions amounted to £310 million of which £75 million was for financing.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to propose changes in the common agricultural policy following the recent

agreement reached by the member countries of the general agreement on tariffs and trade at Punta del Este; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the latest estimate of the amount of the EEC budget for 1986 to be spent on the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jopling: The EC budget for 1986 provides 23,104 mecu for expenditure under the common agricultural policy. This is about 66 per cent. of the total budget.

Forestry Commission

40. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much land the Forestry Commission owns in England; and how much has been sold since May 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Forestry Commission does not own any land. Ownership is vested in England, in the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the land is formally placed at the disposal of the forestry commissioners to manage in accordance with their statutory duties.

As at 31 March 1986, the Forestry Commission managed 285,685 hectares of land in England. Some 20,300 hectares were sold between 1 May 1979 and 21 September 1986.

Animals (Export)

Mr. Craigen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps his Department is taking in conjunction with British and French customs authorities, to ensure that animals are not illegally being transported to Spain, or any other country where the slaughterhouses do not come up to British standards;

(2) to which countries, apart from Spain, the ban on the export of live animals applies for welfare reasons.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is my Department's policy to license exports of farm livestock for immediate slaughter or for further fattening only to member states of the European Community where they will have the protection of Community safeguards on welfare in transit and at the place of slaughter. Since Spain and Portugal have not yet implemented the relevant directives, we have not licensed any exports to them.

In view of the recent reports that live sheep exported to France have in fact been sent on from that country to an abbatoir in Spain, we have told exporters of sheep to France that before any further licence is granted they will have to provide documentary proof from the French importer that the consignment is going to a destination in France and will not be sent on to any other country.

Export Licences

Mr. Craigen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what penalties have been imposed for false declaration of country of destination when applying for an export licence; and how many prosecutions there have been for such false declarations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is not aware that any prosecutions have been taken under the Export of Animals (Protection) Order 1981 for false declarations of country of destination. Recent allegations are currently being investigated.

Nuclear Radiation

Mr. Marland asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to publish a report on the lessons learnt from the Chernobyl disaster so far as his responsibilities for agriculture are concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is playing its full part in the Government's review of contingency arrangements following the Chernobyl accident and will make any necessary changes to its emergency plans. Any revision of the Department's emergency arrangements would be notified to those required to implement them, as well as other Departments and emergency services.

DEFENCE

Nimrod Programme

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the calibre of the scientific and technical staff of his Department overseeing the development of the Nimrod system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have every confidence in the scientific and technical staff employed by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what he attributes the cost overspends and the overruns on the Nimrod programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: These can be largely attributed to what was with hindsight a significant underestimation at the outset of the project in 1977 of the technical difficulty and hence the timescale and cost of completing the work. The absence of contractual incentives was also a contributory factor.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the Nimrod programme required technological innovations; and what account was taken of this when assessing the extent and level of scientific and technical supervision from his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: When it was authorised in 1977, the Nimrod AEW project was considered to be technologically ambitious, but nonetheless achievable within the state of the art at that time. In recognition of the degree of technological innovation required, considerable scientific and technical resources were made available both from the Department's research and development establishments and from headquarters staff.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent poor performance by contractors and failure to follow Ministry of Defence supervision has contributed to delays in the Nimrod programme; and what action was taken by his Department in response to each such incident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The performance by GEC Avionics Ltd. on the Nimrod programme has to be viewed against the background of an initial underestimate of the technical difficulties involved. However, it is because we

were dissatisfied with the action being taken to resolve these difficulties that we initiated the current competition and negotiated the interim risk-sharing contractual arrangements under which development work is currently proceeding.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the application of the outcome of research programmes for Nimrod in areas other than to defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The research work undertaken in support of the Nimrod AEW project has led to significant advances in a number of technical areas, including antennae, high power transmitters and radar signal processing. These are expected to be of value in both civil and military applications. The general aim of encouraging exploitation of defence research for civil benefit has been further enhanced recently by the creation of Defence Technology Enterprises Ltd. which was set up as a joint initiative between MOD and industry.

Aircraft Crashes

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement about the Tornado aircraft crash which occurred on the Otterburn range on 21 October, and resulted in two deaths; and whether, in the light of the nine fatalities which have occurred in military aircraft crashes in north-east England in the last nine years, he will institute a full review of the safety regulations applied to such low flying.

Mr. Freeman: The Tornado aircraft involved was from the German Air Force which, according to established practice, has convened an inquiry, which will be assisted by the RAF, to establish the cause of the accident. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the circumstances of the accident until the inquiry is completed, other than to express my regret at the tragic loss of life. Safety regulations for military flying, both over designated range areas and more generally, are a matter to which I attach great importance and are kept under close and continual review.

Russian Speakers

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the present number of fluent Russian language speakers in each of the armed services compared to the number approximately three years ago.

Mr. Freeman: There are a total of 148 fluent Russian speakers currently in the regular armed forces. This compares with a total of 143 in 1983. A breakdown by Service and year is:

	Royal Navy	*Royal Marines*	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*	*Total*
1986	24	2	106	16	148
1983	26	2	99	16	143

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of seagoing Her Majesty's ships whose complement includes a qualified Russian linguist.

Mr. Freeman: It is not our practice to disclose information of this nature.

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of full-time instructors of the Russian language in each of the armed services for each of the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: Details of the number of full-time instructors of the Russian language in each of the armed services for each of the last three years are as follows. Considerable use is also made of Ministry of Defence employed civilian instructional staff for language tuition for the Armed Services. Details of the number of such civilian staff engaged in full-time Russian language tuition are as follows:

Service	*1986*	*1985*	*1984*
Royal Navy	0	0	0
Army	11	11	8
Royal Air Force	1	1	0
MOD Civilian	24	20	18

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of qulaified Russian language speakers at present actively serving in the Royal Naval Reserve, and the numbers who have completed training commitments for each of the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: There are at present 10 Russian language speakers qualified to interpreter standard serving in the Royal Naval Reserve, all of whom have completed their training commitments for each of the past three years.

RAF Upwood

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to convert all or part of RAF Upwood base in Cambridgeshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital.

Mr. Freeman: RAF Upwood is used by the United States air force for a variety of support functions, including use as a peacetime storage facility and as a hospital which would be activated in an emergency.

RAF Cosford

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to convert all or part of RAF Cosford base in Shropshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital.

Mr. Freeman: The future of RAF Cosford is still being considered.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by variant the number of *(a)* short range nuclear weapons with a range of up to 200 km and *(b)* medium range nuclear missiles with a range of between 200 km and 1,000 km that have been removed from Europe as a result of the 27 October 1983 Montebello decision of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name and describe the procedures of financial

appraisal and checking of commercial reliability applied to a company wishing to supply goods or services under contract to his Department, specifying when each procedure is applied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Companies wishing to supply goods or services to the Ministry of Defence and to be registered on the defence contractors list are required to complete application forms (standardised across all Government departments) providing details of their financial standing, technical capabilities and quality systems. Bank and trade references are taken up and the audited accounts provided are appraised by the Ministry's professional accountants.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list showing, for each of the last three years *(a)* the number of his Department's contracts made for the supply of goods or services, *(b)* the total number of companies receiving such contracts and *(c)* the number of companies receiving contracts totalling £5 million or more in value.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is as follows:

(a) The number of MOD headquarters contracts and financial amendments placed for the supply of goods and services for financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85 are as shown in table 2.10 of the statement on the Defence Estimates 1986. For financial year 1985-86 the number is 116,552.

(b) The total numbers of companies receiving individual contracts worth more than £5,000 in value were approximately 4,120 in 1983-84, 4,215 in 1984-85 and 4,410 in 1985-86. Information is not readily available for lower value contracts.

(c) The numbers of companies receiving contracts totalling £5 million or more in value were some, 115 in 1983-84; 75 in 1984-85 and 140 in 1985-86.

The figures given in *(a)* exclude local purchase orders, which totalled 495,413 in 1983-84, 505,880 in 1984-85 and 435,395 in 1985-86. The number of companies receiving such orders is not available.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will describe what statistical information is available about the work load and results of the procedures of financial appraisal and checking of commercial viability applied to companies in relation to the supply of goods or services to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In 1985-86 the Ministry's professional accountants undertook some 700 financial appraisals of accounts (including where necessary those of parent and holding companies) of companies wishing to become suppliers of goods or services to the Ministry of Defence. As a result of these appraisals the Ministry declined applications from some 40 companies. In the same year the Ministry's accountants appraised some 240 accounts of contractors who are regularly employed by the Ministry on larger value non-competitive contracts.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will describe what information is available about contracts for the supply of goods or services that have been broken in recent years, including contracts that have been broken by a company becoming insolvent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information could not be provided without disproportionate time and effort.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will name and describe the procedures of financial appraisal and checking of commercial viability applied to a company engaged to supply goods or services to his Department when the ownership or control of the company changes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will identify the procedures of financial appraisal and checking of commercial viability applied to a company wishing to supply goods or services under contract to his Department which include some examination of ownership or control of the company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: When the Ministry is made aware of a change in the ownership of a defence contractor, copies of audited accounts provided by the new owner are appraised by the Ministry's professional accountants in the same manner as for a new applicant for registration.

When a change of ownership takes place during the currency of a contract, any legal action necessary is taken to transfer formally the relevant contract after the financial and technical competence of the new company has been established. Changes in the control of a company, but not its ownership, do not require re-registration procedures since any existing contractual obligations would be unaffected.

Companies seeking registration are required to provide details of all associated companies, directors and major shareholders. Amendments to this information are sought if there is a change in the ownership of a company already registered on the defence contractor's list.

Cray Computers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list showing for each year since 1979, the numbers and types of Cray computers *(a)* on order for his Department and *(b)* operational within his Department specifying the location of each such computer operational in the period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Ordered*	*Location*	*Total in operation*
1979	1xCray1A	AWRE Aldermaston	1xCray1A
1980	—	—	1xCray1A
1981	—	—	1xCray1A
1982	—	—	1xCray1A
1983	1xCray1S	FAE Farnborough	1xCray1A, 1xCray1S
1983	1xCray1S	RARDE Fort Halstead	2xCray1S, 1xCray1A
1984	1xCrayXMP	AWRE Aldermaston	2xCray1S, 1xCray1A, 1xCrayXMP
1985	—	—	2xCray1S, 1xCray1A, 1xCrayXMP
1986[1]	—	—	2xCray1S, 1xCray1A, 1xCrayXMP

[1] To date.

Northern Ireland

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his written answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *303-4*, whether he has anything to add concerning the figures for the strength of the armed forces of the Crown in Northern Ireland in each of the months in the period September 1985 to May 1986.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1986, c. *303-4*]: I regret that the figures quoted in my answer have been found to contain errors. The correct figures are as follows:

The numbers of armed forces personnel in Northern Ireland (as at end of each month) are as follows:

	RN/RM	*Army*	*RAF*	*UDR*	*Total*
1985					
September	191	8,873	1,000	6,451	16,515
October	189	9,044	988	6,503	16,724
November	185	9,014	989	6,478	16,666
December	184	8,912	994	6,508	16,598
1986					
January	184	9,470	1,054	6,542	17,250
February	188	9,918	998	6,547	17,651
March	188	9,906	984	6,562	17,640
April	188	10,122	971	6,559	17,840
May	188	10,161	1,025	6,541	17,915

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 31 October 1986

ENERGY

Sellafield (Schoolchildren's Visit)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the party of children from Matthew Humberston school, Humberside detained by United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority police at Sellafield was detained by armed constables; and on what authority film and tape was confiscated.

Mr. Goodlad: As in the case of many industrial establishments, the free use of photography is not allowed and the attention of visitors is drawn to this fact. It appears that film and video tape were in this case nevertheless taken on to the site. Acting under site security instructions, the security police questioned the teacher in charge. Film and video tape were, on request, handed over to unarmed members of the UKAEA constabulary. They will be returned once they have been checked.

British Gas

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement about the British Gas offer for sale.

Mr. Peter Walker: A pathfinder prospectus—that is, a prospectus subject to revision and without a price for the shares—is being published today. Copies are available in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office. Preliminary registration statements will also be filed in the United States, Canada and Japan. I intend to offer the shares for sale on Friday 21 November with the prospectus being widely distributed on Tuesday 25 November and the last date for receipt of applications being Wednesday 3 December.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest Relief

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the estimated costs at current and at constant prices of mortgage interest tax relief in 1960, 1970, 1980, 1985 and 1990, showing the cost as a proportion of income tax revenue, and the effect of the concession on the amount of the income tax base in each year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimated costs of mortgage interest tax relief are as follows:

	Mortgage interest relief		
	Current prices	*1985-86 prices*[1]	*as a percentage of income tax and surtax receipts*
	£ million	*£ million*	*per cent.*
1960-61	70	540	2·7
1970-71	285	1,440	4·8
1980-81	1,960	2,720	8·1
1985-86	4,750	4,750	13·4

[1] Expressed in 1985-86 prices using the retail prices index.

Details of the amount of mortgage interest on which the tax relief in 1960-61 and 1970-71 was based are not readily available. Mortgage interest eligible for tax relief is estimated to have been £6 billion in 1980-81 and about £15 billion in 1985-86. The cost of relief in 1985-86 includes the cost of relief in respect of mortgages previously under the option mortgage scheme. The cost of mortgage interest relief in 1990-91 will depend on factors such as the level of borrowing, mortgage interest rates and the tax regime in that year.

Personal Income

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will detail the total of personal income going to the top 1 per cent., 2 per cent., 3 per cent., 4 per cent. and 5 per cent., respectively, before and after tax of each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

WALES

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to change the cash limit for the current year in respect of rate support grants to Welsh local authorities.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes. Subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the following amendment is proposed. The cash limit for rate support grant, class XVII, vote 10, will be increased by £5,000,000, from £875,807,000 to £880,807,000, mainly to reflect adjustments to holdback in respect of 1984-85 and 1985-86 in the light of outturn expenditure information. Payments from this vote are not classified as public expenditure, so there is no effect on the reserve. The adjustment of block grant will, of course, be subject to the approval of the requisite supplementary rate support grant reports by the House.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dairy Products

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if a date has yet been agreed for ceasing the intervention buying of butter and skimmed milk.

Mr. Gummer: No. There are currently no plans to cease the intervention buying of butter. A Commission proposal to end the intervention buying of skimmed milk powder between October and March and to make other changes in the intervention system is still under consideration by the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Departmental Cash Limits

Sir Paul Hawkins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is proposed to change the cash limit on any departmental Vote for which he has responsibility and his running costs limit.

Mr. Jopling: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limits on Votes for which I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland are responsible will be increased in order to make provision for the costs of settlement of the legal action in the case of Bourgoin SA and others and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, as announced on 23 July 1986 at column 116, to cover redundancy payments arising from decisions announced on 22 January 1985 at column 401 to reduce expenditure on advisory services, research and development and to purchase milk quota in England, Wales and Scotland for redistribution to producers in Northern Ireland.

The increases are as follows:

£'000

Class	*Vote*	*Original cash limit*	*Increase due to redundancy costs*	*Increase due to purchase of milk quota*	*Other changes affecting cash limit*	*Revised cash limit*
IV	4	139,393	—	[1]477	—	139,870
IV	5	211,366	900	—	[2]+3,617 [3]−129	215,754
XVI	2	75,166	2,630	[1]47	—	77,843

[1] Offset by corresponding reductions in the Northern Ireland cash block, NID1.
[2] Increase required to repay an advance from the Contingencies Fund for settlement of legal action for damages in the case of Bourgoin SA and others and the Ministry of Agriculture.
[3] Additional receipts sought as appropriations in aid and other offsetting savings.

As a result of the redundancy costs there will be a £0.871 million increase in the running costs limit for my Department from £208·949 million to £209·820 million.

There is a corresponding charge to the reserve of £7·018 million and therefore these changes will not add to the planning total of public expenditure.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to propose changes in the common agricultural policy following the recent agreement reached by the member countries of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade at Punta del Este; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 October 1986]: Within the European Economic Community, we have consistently advocated changes to the Common Agricultural Policy to make it more responsive to the market place, and to reduce the production and the budgetary costs of surpluses. Such policies would undoubtedly make a positive contribution towards the successful negotiation of a new GATT round.

PRIME MINISTER

Value Added Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she will publish in the *Official Report* the undertakings given on value added tax when the terms of our membership of the EEC were negotiated and re-negotiated.

The Prime Minister: The rates and coverage of VAT in the United Kingdom were not part of the accession negotiations or "renegotiations".

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government intend to accede to the proposal made by the European Economic Community Commission that the United Kingdom should impose value added tax on new housing; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government completely and utterly reject the Commission's proposal and will defend the issue before the European Court. I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Treasury in the House on 4 March 1986 at column *94*, and my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in reply to the Summer Adjournment debate on this subject in the House on 25 July at columns 923-26.

Visas

Mr. Janner asked the Prime Minister what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the relative cost of sending entry clearance officers to India as opposed to stationing extra staff at Heathrow.

The Prime Minister: The decision to impose a visa requirement on the citizens of Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Pakistan and Nigeria took account of the relative staff costs in this country and abroad. Account was also taken of the fact that modern airports are not the place for making detailed examination of large numbers of difficult cases. The need to strengthen pre-entry control meant, therefore, that more immigration officers at the ports would not have been a sensible response to the problems which had arisen.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to place a limit on the amount of supplementary benefit that can be paid to foreigners, compatible with the respective levels available in their own countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: No. Entitlement to supplementary benefit depends upon immigration status and there is no nationality test. In those circumstances where benefit is payable to a person from abroad, it is at the rate appropriate to the person's requirements and resources in this country and has no regard to levels of social assistance available in other countries where different costs of living apply.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Women Prisoners

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women were admitted to special hospitals on transfer from prisons, remand centres and youth custody centres under sections 47 and 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983; and if he will list for each year since 1980 the age of the prisoner, the diagnosis and the length of stay in the special hospital or prison establishment from which the transfer has taken place.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information for years 1980 to 1985 by length of custody prior to admission to a special hospital is shown in the table.

Women admitted to special hospitals on transfer from prisons, remand centres and youth custody centres under sections 47, 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983[1] by age, type of mental disorder and length of stay in custody prior to admission 1980-85

Number of women

		Year of admission					
		1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Section 47	All	[2]4	[3]3	[3]1	3	1	[3]4
Age at time of transfer							
Under 21		—	—	—	1	—	—
21-29		2	2	1	2	1	3
30-39		1	1	—	—	—	1
40-49		1	—	—	—	—	—
50-59		—	—	—	—	—	—
60 and over		—	—	—	—	—	—
Type of mental disorder							
Mental illness		2	1	—	2	—	1
Psychopathic disorder		1	2	1	1	[4]1	2
Subnormality		1	—	—	—	—	—
Mental impairment		—	—	—	—	[4]1	1
Length of stay in prison department establishments prior to admission to special hospital							
Up to 3 months		1	2	—	—	—	—
Over 3 and up to 6 months		—	—	—	—	—	—
Over 6 and up to 12 months		1	—	—	—	—	2
Over 1 and up to 2 years		1	1	1	1	1	1
Over 2 and up to 3 years		1	—	—	1	—	—
Over 3 and up to 4 years		—	—	—	1	—	—
Over 4 and up to 5 years		—	—	—	—	—	1
Section 48	All	1	—	—	—	3	—
Age at time of transfer							
Under 21		—	—	—	—	1	—
21-29		—	—	—	—	2	—
30-59		—	—	—	—	—	—
60 and over		1	—	—	—	—	—
Length of stay in prison department establishments prior to admission to special hosptial							
Up to 3 months		1	—	—	—	3	—
Type of mental disorder							
Mental illness		1	—	—	—	3	—

[1] Or equivalent under the Mental Health Act 1959.
[2] Including one transferred from police cells.
[3] Includes one woman not subject to special restrictions on discharge.
[4] Both types of mental disorder applied to the woman.

Prisoners (Escape from Custody)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review procedures for giving prisoners medical attention in the light of the recent escape of Mark Cooper in Portsmouth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Statutory responsibility for the health care of inmates of any prison service establishment rests with the medical officer of the establishment, who has complete clinical freedom to determine the treatment needs of his patients and to make such arrangements as he considers appropriate for meeting them. The decision whether a particular type of treatment required by a patient can best

be provided in situ, or at another establishment within the prison system, or at an outside hospital or clinic, will depend on the circumstances of the individual case and the options available. Security considerations will be among those taken into account, but the medical officer's primary concern must be to meet his statutory and professional obligations to his patient. When a full report on Mr. Cooper's case is available the Director of Prison Medical Services will consider whether there are any lessons to be drawn from it which could usefully be brought to the attention of medical officers.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prison officers were accompanying Mark Cooper at the time of his escape from St. Mary's hospital, Portsmouth on 23 October;

(2) if Mark Cooper was left alone for any period of time prior to his recent abscondment in Portsmouth.

Mr. Mellor: On 22 October Mr. Cooper, an inmate at Kingston prison, escaped from an outside hospital to which he had been taken, escorted by two officers, for a session of physiotherapy. Inquiries into the circumstances of the escape are continuing. However, preliminary reports indicate that, at the end of the session, one officer remained in the gymnasium where the session had taken place while the prisoner changed in an adjoining alcove and the other officer went to arrange transport for the return journey to the prison. It appears that the prisoner escaped through a fire escape door from the alcove. He was apprehended by police at Northwich in Cheshire the following morning.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have escaped from custody while on hospital visits in the past four years.

Mr. Mellor: The number of adult prisoners reported as having escaped from outside hospitals to which they had been sent for treatment, either as in-patients or as out-patients, were as follows:

Year	*Number*
1982	20
1983	19
1984	25
1985	17

Eight such cases were reported in the first nine months of this year.

Ethnic Minorities (Bail)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the refusal of bail to persons from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Mellor: A few of the letters received by the Home Office have included such representations by individuals in relation to individual cases, but precise figures are not available.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has issued to magistrates on policy towards the circumstances in which bail should be given or refused; if this has included any specific guidance relating to persons from the ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None; the decision whether or not to grant bail is one which a magistrates court takes, in exercise of its judicial discretion, in accordance with the powers conferred by the Bail Act 1976.

Firearms (Public Places)

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to seek to increase police powers to deal with the firing of blanks from loaded guns in public places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Hamilton and Howarth v. British Broadcasting Corporation

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate discussions with the British Broadcasting Corporation under section 18(2) of the British Broadcasting Corporation's royal charter with a view to the inclusion by the Corporation in its next annual report of details of the memorandum submitted to the board of management of the British Broadcasting Corporation by James Hogan, Panorama producer on 13 October, listing those potential witnesses in Hamilton and Howarth *v.* the British Broadcasting Corporation who changed their positions regarding their evidence following the beginning of legal proceedings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Visitors (Entry Criteria)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the criteria used by entry clearance officers in Pakistan to determine whether an intending visitor to Britain will leave at the end of the visit are the same as those used by immigration officers at United Kingdom ports of entry.

Mr. Waddington: Yes.

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to publish a revised edition of the guide to safety at sports grounds (the Green Guide).

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have today published a revised edition of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds, for improving spectator safety at existing sports grounds. The new edition, prepared in the light of recommendations of the Popplewell inquiry, remains a voluntary guide. I have arranged for copies of the guide to be placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Nimrod Programme

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek the establishment of an independent board of experts to review the relative merits of Nimrod and the competing systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. I am satisfied that we have available to us all the expertise necessary to assess the

relative merits of the two systems remaining in the United Kingdom AEW competition, the Boeing E3A and the Nimrod AEW.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many W-79 nuclear shells Britain has agreed to take for issuing to the British Army of the Rhine;

(2) when he intends to make a statement concerning the modernisation of the British Army of the Rhine's nuclear artillery shells.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 29 October.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards deployment by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of the W79 nuclear warhead.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 20 January 1986 at columns *90-91* and to the latest communiqué of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. No decisions have been taken regarding the modernisation of the battlefield nuclear weapons of British forces.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence which artillery systems currently in service with the British Army of the Rhine are capable of firing the W-79 nuclear shell.

Mr. Stanley: The M110.

NATO (Ministerial Meeting)

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of Defence when is the next North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ministerial meeting.

Mr. Stanley: The next scheduled NATO ministerial meeting is that of the Defence Planning Committee in Brussels early in December.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Martin Love in Fermanagh on 8 April 1985; and if he will give details;

(2) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John McVitty in Fermanagh on 8 July; and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Martin Blaney in South Tyrone on 6 October; and if he will give details.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986, columns *17-18*]: Two people have been convicted of the murder of Martin Love. There have been no convictions in respect of the murders of John McVitty or Martin Blaney.

ENVIRONMENT

Property Services Agency

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the cost of the Property Services Agency's proposed reorganisation of its United Kingdom territorial organisation in each of the years 1987 to 1991, respectively; and how additional public expenditure will be incurred.

Mr. Chope: The present estimated net costs and savings arising from reorganisation of the United Kingdom territorial organisation are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1987-88 Cost	1·65
1988-89 Saving	1·09
1989-90 Saving	7·86
1990-91 Saving	5·91

There are further substantial savings in later years and an investment appraisal shows that pay-back is expected to occur in 1989-90. Apart from these savings the reorganisation will produce substantial benefits, which cannot be quantified, through better service to clients and better value for money. It fulfils the recommendation of the PAC made in its 30th report 1983-84 and its 19th report 1984-85 that the chain of command should be shortened.

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the additional costs and prospective savings to be realised in the eastern region of the Property Services Agency in the course of its proposed reorganisation.

Mr. Chope: In my reply to my hon. Friend today I have given him the net costs and savings arising from the reorganisation of the UKTO throughout the country. These figures include savings from increased managerial efficiency through the organisation as a whole. Specific figures for individual areas are therefore not available.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what will be the total cost to carry out the proposed re-organisation of the Property Services Agency;

(2) what are the estimated annual savings that will result from the re-organisation of the Property Services Agency; and, in particular, what are the estimated annual savings which may result from the proposed closure of the Cheltenham area office.

Mr. Chope: The present estimated net costs and savings arising from reorganisation of the United Kingdom territorial organisation are as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	1·65 cost
1988-89	1·09 saving
1989-90	7·86 saving
1990-91	5·91 saving

There are further substantial savings in later years and an investment appraisal shows that pay-back is expected to occur in 1989-90. Apart from these savings the organisation will produce substantial benefits, which cannot be quantified, through better service to clients and better value for money. It fulfils the recommendation of

the PAC made in its 30th report 1983-84 and its 19th Report 1984-85 that the chain of command should be shortened.

The net costs and savings include savings through from managerial efficiency through the organisation as a whole. Specific figures for the Cheltenham area office are not available.

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the present number of personnel employed by the Property Services Agency in the Leeds area at each of the buildings occupied, the square footage of space provided at each address with the annual cost per square foot where rentals apply.

Mr. Chope: Buildings occupied by the PSA in Leeds are:

Building	*Staff*	*Area Occupied Sq ft*	*Cost Where rentals Apply*
Government Building Lawnswood	223	46,200	Freehold
Liverpool Victoria House Headingly	59	8,900	£4·1 per sq ft rent
District Works Office Kirkstall Road	[1]41	[2]21,000	Freehold

[1] Including 15 industrial
[2] Including workshops

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what alternative office accommodation is being considered for the staff currently employed at the PSA area works office in York; and at what cost per square foot by comparison with existing accommodation.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1986, c. *116*]: The intention is to base all staff transferred to Leeds at the regional headquarters at Lawnswood, Leads, but because of other changes on the Government estates it will be necessary to base some staff in accommodation elsewhere in Leeds which has not yet been identified and costed.

The cost per square foot for accommodation at Lawnswood is £4.35 as against £3·65 for the present accommodation in York.

Orlit Houses

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of local authorities with Orlit or Orlit-type houses in their area, showing total numbers of houses, numbers demolished, numbers on which remedial work has started, and numbers still awaiting attention, for each local authority.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the information deposited in the Library in July, in reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 7 July 1986 at columns *35-36;* this gives, for each local authority in England, the reported number of dwellings of each type designated under the housing defects legislation. It shows that some 87 authorities reported having Orlit houses in their area, amounting in total to some 8,000 dwellings. Information is not held centrally on the number of Orlit dwellings demolished, awaiting demolition or on which remedial work has started.

Thamesmead

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what valuation has been placed on the lands and buildings at Thamesmead by the London residuary body; on what basis the valuation was carried out; and what arrangements are to be made for the payments from Thamesmead Town Ltd.

Mr. Chope: The parties are negotiating the terms of transfer, including the arrangements for payments, informed by a valuation produced by the district valuer. It will not be helpful to release details at this stage.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects responsibility for Thamesmead to be transferred from the London residuary body to Thamesmead Town Ltd.

Mr. Chope: I understand that the chairmen of the London residuary body and Thamesmead Town expect responsibility to transfer on 1 January 1987.

Highways Act 1980

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list, for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 and for each regional office of his Department, the applications received for the making by him of public path creation, diversion and extinguishment orders under the powers in sections 26(2) and 120(3) of the Highways Act 1980 stating in each case *(a)* the parish concerned and the number of the footpath or bridleway, *(b)* whether the application was for a creation, diversion or extinguishment order, *(c)* whether he agreed to prepare a draft order and *(d)* where a draft order was prepared, whether or not it subsequently was made;

(2) whether persons who apply to him to exercise his powers under section 120(3) of the Highways Act 1980 to make a public path diversion or extinguishment order are required by him to enter into an agreement to defray the costs incurred by him in preparing and giving notice of the draft order, in arranging and holding any public inquiry or hearing into objections to the draft order, including the cost of employing an inspector, and in giving notice of his subsequent decision.

Mr. Waldegrave: I would refer the hon. Member to the answers given by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 28 January to his previous questions on these two subjects (*Official Report*, column *468*).

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what material changes were made in proposals for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement between the consultation paper sent to local authorities immediately after the submission of 22 July and the most recent consultation paper published on 3 October.

Mr. Chope: The consultation paper issued on 22 July set out the Secretary of State's proposals on expenditure provision an aggregate Exchequer grant for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement. The further consultation paper issued on 3 October set out his proposals on the distribution of block grant and gave details of authorities' block grant entitlements. There were no material changes

in the Secretary of State's proposals on expenditure provision and aggregate Exchequer grant in the further consultation paper.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his statement of 22 July, *Official Report*, column 182, if he will list the 40 local authorities whose rate it was intended, as of that date, to limit for 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: The 20 authorities which have been selected for rate limitation in 1987-88 are Basildon, Brent, Brighton, Camden, Gateshead, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Newham, North Tyneside, Sheffield, Southwark, Thamesdown and Tower Hamlets.

In addition, 19 joint authorities, set up on the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan counties, and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) are automatically precept-limited for three years from 1986-87 under section 68 of the Local Government Act 1985. Those authorities are as follows:

London Preceptors
ILEA
London Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Police Joint Authorities for:
Greater Manchester
Merseyside
South Yorkshire
Northumbria
West Midlands
West Yorkshire

Fire and Civil Defence Joint Authorities for:
Greater Manchester
Merseyside
South Yorkshire
Tyne and Wear
West Midlands
West Yorkshire

Transport Joint Authorities for:
Greater Manchester
Merseyside
South Yorkshire
Tyne and Wear
West Midlands
West Yorkshire

Water Authorities

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the water authorities which have satisfied his Department that they are meeting their obligations under the Water Resources Act 1963 to set standards for minimum acceptable flows in the rivers in their area.

Mr. Ridley: Under the 1963 Act water authorities are required to consider for which inland waters minimun acceptable flows ought to be determined, but the setting of these is not mandatory and none has in fact been set. Repeal of the formal requirement has been proposed by the Government in their consultation paper on water and sewerage law, which was published last March and deposited in the Library of the House, but final decisions on implementation have yet to be taken.

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the occasions within the last three years on which his Department has been asked by a water authority to approve the lowering of its own discharge consent conditions.

Mr. Ridley: Following the implementation of the main provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in January 1985 there has been a major review of water authority sewage treatment works discharge consents. Of the some 6,000 discharges in England, around 1,800 have been granted relaxed conditions, generally where there was expected to be no appreciable effect on the receiving water. In a small number of cases, which are subject to early review, the relaxed consents have been allowed pending already programmed capital investment. It is not readily possible to list the specific cases, but water authorities maintain public registers giving the details.

Councillors (Firearms Offences)

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to disbar from public office councillors convicted of firearms offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No new legislation is needed. Under section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972, a person is disqualified from being a councillor if within the previous five years he has been convicted of any offence and has had passed on him a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine. There is a wide range of firearm offences and maximum sentences range from three months to life imprisonment. The disqualification of any individual councillor convicted of a firearms offence depends upon the sentence actually passed.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bophuthatswana

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 23 October, if he will state by what manner of contact or information Her Majesty's Government will satisfy itself as to whether or not Bophuthatswana fulfils the normal criteria for recognition.

Mr. Eggar: We take our decisions in the light of all the information available to us, including information as to territory, population, administration and capacity for independent action.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer to hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 23 October, if he will state by what degree Bophuthatswana has satisfied or failed to satisfy the normal criteria for recognition.

Mr. Eggar: We take decisions on the recognition of states on the basis of criteria referred to by my hon. Friend the Minister of State in her answer of 23 October. There is no particular degree or scale relevant to such decisions.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer to hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 23 October, if he will list those occasional visits by officials to Bophuthatswana, their date and purpose, which are known to him.

Mr. Eggar: Detailed records of visits are not kept; but, for example, officials have visited Bophuthatswana at approximately three-monthly intervals to see British subjects imprisoned there.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present 12 meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for November.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 3 November and will consider a number of items from the Presidency Action Programme.

The Transport Council will meet on 10 and 11 November. As the Presidency, the United Kingdom will aim to build on the progress made at the informal meeting of European Community Transport Ministers in London on October 3 and try to secure adoption of a package of practical measures to liberalise European air transport. The meeting will also consider the Commission proposals on a Community transport infrastructure policy and arrangements for liberalising road haulage.

The Development Council will meet on 11 December and is expected to consider a Commission proposal for a new Council regulation on food aid policy, a draft resolution on population policy in community aid programmes, a Commission report on EDF programming and a report on famine rehabilitation. The Council may also consider a draft regulation establishing a system of compensation ("Compex") for losses in export earnings to least developed countries which are not signatory to the Lomé convention.

The Cultural Affairs Council will meet on 13 November and will consider resolutions on architectural heritage, translation, business sponsorship and conservation. The Council is expected to discuss a number of subjects under "any other business", including the Presidency report on the British Film Institute symposium and "Glasgow, City of Culture".

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 17 November to discuss the Commission's annual report on the economic situation in the Community; the draft directive on liberalisation of capital movements; the Commission proposal for a further new Community instrument (NCI IV) for project lending in the Community; and the proposed new Framework programme for Community research and development, in the context of the budget discipline conclusions. The Council may also discuss a revision to an existing mandate on tied aid financing. In line with the remit from its meeting in June, as endorsed by the European Council, the Council has continued work on proposals for harmonising the structure of VAT and excise duties, and may review the progress made to date.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 17 and 18 November. Among the subjects likely to be discussed are the reform of the Community's beef regime; emergency measures in the milk sector; the social butter scheme; socio-structural measures; extraction solvents; medicated feedingstuffs; and eradication directives for live animals of the bovine and porcine species. It may also consider four food law directives and other items concerned with the completion of the internal market.

The Industry Council will meet on 18 November. The Council will continue its discussion of the Commission's proposal for a sixth Council directive on aid to shipbuilding to replace the existing directive which expires on 31 December 1986. The Council will also resume discussion of the Commission's proposals to free certain steel products from the production quota system from the beginning of 1987. Ministers are, in addition, expected to consider a draft Council recommendation on the integrated services digital network designed to harmonise the progressive introduction of advanced telecommunications within the Community.

The Environment Council will meet on 24 November. Among items for discussion are large combustion plants, vehicle emissions, the Fourth Environment Action Programme, chlorofluorcarbons, the sulphur content of gas oil and motorcycle noise.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 24 and 25 November. The Council is likely to consider Commission proposals for the Community's generalised scheme of preferences for 1987. It will also discuss Mediterranean financial protocols, to decide a mandate for the negotiation of the new generation of Maghreb and Mashraq financial protocols; and EC/Turkey, to agree a Community position for discussions with Turkey on the provisions of the EC/Turkey Association Agreement relating to the free circulation of labour. The council may also review EC/US trade relations, including specific current bilateral problems; and discuss the Commission's proposals for a review of arrangements for trade in steel between the Community and third country producers.

The Energy Council will meet on 26 November. The council is expected to discuss a number of subjects, including the oil market, oil stocks, energy efficieny, new and renewable sources of energy, national use of energy in transport, oil refinery capacity and petroleum products, energy labelling and Euratom chapter III.

The Budget Council is due to meet on 26 and 27 November to discuss the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the 1987 draft budget, which was established by the council on 9 September.

The Education Council is expected to meet on 28 November to consider a proposal for a European Community action scheme for the mobility of university students (ERASMUS).

SCOTLAND

Matrimonial Homes Act

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now publish the findings of the research commissioned by his Department into the workings of the Matrimonial Homes Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I hope to publish the report of this research as soon as the final text is available, which is likely to be next spring.

Railways (Grants)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of section 20 payments paid by Strathclyde regional council to Scotrail came out of central Government rate grant; what is the value of this percentage; and if he has any plans to alter it.

Mr. Ancram: Rate support grant is payable in support of local authorities' revenues generally and not in relation to individual items of expenditure. Rate support grant for Strathclyde region for 1986-87 is 53·1 per cent. of budgeted

relevant expenditure. (No adjustment has been made for grant penalties since they will be restored if authorities reduce their expediture to guideline on outturn.)

Labour Statistics

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number and percentage of those unemployed in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow, Central who have been out of work for (i) up to one year, (ii) up to two years and (iii) up to three years.

Mr. Lang: At 10 July 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in *(a)* City of Glasgow local authority district and *(b)* Glasgow Central parliamentary constituency, by duration and the percentage that each category represents of the total number of unemployed claimants, are shown in the table. This information is available in the Library.

Duration unemployed	*City of Glasgow local authority district*		*Glasgow Central parliamentary constituency*	
	Number of unemployed claimants	*Percentage of total unemployed claimants*	*Number of unemployed claimants*	*Percentage of total unemployed claimants*
Up to one year	38,526	49·9	3,653	49·5
One to two years	12,874	16·7	1,230	16·7
Two to three years	7,182	9·3	687	9·3

Saughton Prison, Edinburgh

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about conditions at Saughton prison, Edinburgh.

Mr. Lang: Like other Scottish prisons, Edinburgh prison at present holds more inmates than it was originally designed to accommodate. This has had adverse effects on the regime, but the governor and his staff make every effort to maintain acceptable conditions.

EMPLOYMENT

TVEI

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what percentage of TVEI students stay on for the full course after 16 years of age; how this compares with the overall rate of 16-year-olds staying on for full-time education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: About 40 per cent. of students from the first cohort, from the first group of 14 TVEI projects stayed in full-time education, after 16, of whom about 60 per cent. were designated TVEI courses. This compares with a figure of about 38 per cent. for non-TVEI students at the schools taking part in the project and of 46 per cent. for the year-group across the country as a whole. In both cases there were significant variations between individual local education authorities and between individual schools within local education authorities.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if, for each month of the 100 per cent. YTS leavers survey, he will publish the destinations of leavers in each of the Manpower Services Commission regions.

Mr. Trippier: The table up-dates the information provided in my previous reply to the hon. Member on 25 July 1986 at columns *583-594*. It reports the results of the 100 per cent. follow-up survey of YTS leavers conducted by the Manpower Services Commission, and represents the response to the question "What are you doing now?" Questionnaires are sent to young people some three months after they have left YTS.

	All	*In a full-time job*		*In a part-time job*	*Unemployed*	*On another YTS scheme*	*On a full time course*	*Doing something else*	*Not answered*
		same employer	*different employer*						
SOUTH EAST									
February 1986	64	20	45	3	25	4	1	2	..
March 1986	68	25	42	4	21	3	1	2	1
April 1986	68	20	49	4	21	2	1	2	1
LONDON									
February 1986	60	19	41	3	26	5	1	4	1
March 1986	60	23	37	3	23	8	1	3	1
April 1986	61	26	35	3	26	6	2	2	1
SOUTH WEST									
February 1986	59	17	42	4	28	4	1	4	1
March 1986	66	31	35	4	20	7	1	2	1
April 1986	60	20	41	5	27	5	1	2	..
WEST MIDLANDS									
February 1986	52	18	34	3	33	9	1	2	..
March 1986	54	25	28	3	29	10	1	2	1

	All	In a full-time job same employer	In a full-time job different employer	In a part-time job	Unemployed	On another YTS scheme	On a full time course	Doing something else	Not answered
April 1986	54	23	31	4	32	6	1	3	1
EAST MIDLANDS AND EASTERN									
February 1986	58	17	41	6	26	6	1	3	1
March 1986	61	28	33	3	23	8	1	3	1
April 1986	62	21	41	5	25	4	1	3	1
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE									
February 1986	44	16	28	3	40	9	1	3	1
March 1986	53	26	26	3	34	6	1	3	1
April 1986	53	19	34	4	35	5	..	2	..
NORTH WEST									
February 1986	49	13	36	4	37	6	1	3	1
March 1986	61	31	30	2	27	6	1	2	1
April 1986	54	17	37	4	35	4	1	2	1
NORTHERN									
February 1986	41	15	27	4	42	9	1	3	1
March 1986	44	17	27	5	35	10	1	4	1
April 1986	42	13	29	5	44	6	1	2	1
WALES									
February 1986	46	15	32	4	37	7	1	4	1
March 1986	43	17	26	5	36	11	..	4	1
April 1986	42	13	29	4	39	7	2	4	1
SCOTLAND									
February 1986	42	15	27	3	43	9	1	2	..
March 1986	42	17	25	4	40	11	1	2	1
April 1986	40	11	29	4	44	7	2	2	1
GREAT BRITAIN									
February 1986	47	15	32	3	38	7	1	3	1
March 1986	53	24	29	4	31	8	1	3	1
April 1986	50	17	33	4	36	6	1	2	1

.. less than 0·5 per cent.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available from the 100 per cent. YTS leavers surveys about *(a)* the range and average wages earned, *(b)* the hours worked and *(c)* the types of jobs done by those leavers (i) in full-time work with the same employer, (ii) in full-time work with a different employer and (iii) in part-time work.

Mr. Trippier: The tables update the information provided in my previous reply to the hon. Member on 25 July 1986 at column *593*. The information relates to young people who left YTS schemes between April 1985 and March 1986. Information is not available on the hours worked. The earnings data are provided by young people themselves and may be subject to some error.

Weekly take home pay of YTS leavers
April 1985 to March 1986

Percentage of leavers earning	Full-time jobs with same employer per cent.	Full-time jobs with different employer per cent.	Part-time job per cent.
Less than £20	less than 1	less than 1	5
£20 to £39·99	26	21	64
£40 to £59·99	55	56	24
£60 to £79·99	17	18	5
£80 to £99·99	2	3	2
£100 or more	1	1	1
Average weekly take-home pay	£50	£51	£39

Source: YTS follow up questionnaires addressed to a 10 per cent. sample of leavers between April 1985 and March 1986.

Occupation of jobs of YTS leavers
April 1985 to March 1986

percentage

Occupational training family	Full-time job with same employer	Full-time job with different employer	Part-time job
Administrative/Clerical	24	25	7
Agriculture	3	2	3
Craft/Design	8	4	1
Maintenance/Repair	14	8	2
Technical/Scientific	3	3	1
Manufacturing	10	17	4
Processing	1	2	1
Food preparation	4	6	14
Sales/Personal service	15	12	35
Community/Health	2	3	8
Transport	1	1	1
Other occupation	9	10	13
No answer given	8	8	11

Source: YTS follow up questionnaires addressed to 100 per cent. of leavers between April 1985 and March 1986.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will place in the Library the full results of all the 100 per cent. YTS leavers surveys which have been conducted.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to my previous reply on 25 July 1986 at columns *593-94*. The report referred to in that reply has now been lodged in the Library.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if, for each survey of leavers conducted since YTS began, he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and percentage of leavers in each who were *(a)* in full-time work with the same employer, *(b)* in full-time work with a different employer, *(c)* in part-time work, *(d)* on a full-time course at a college or training centre, *(e)* back at school, *(f)* on another YTS, *(g)* doing something else and *(h)* unemployed, showing for each survey the total number of usable questionnaires returned, the percentage response rate and the number of those who responded who were early leavers.

Mr. Trippier: The table updates the information provided in my previous reply to the hon. Member on 25 July 1986 at columns *582-84*. It reports the results of surveys of YTS leavers conducted by the Manpower Services Commission and represents the response to the question "What are you doing now?" Questionnaires are sent to young people some three months after they have left YTS.

Young people who left YTS

	Ad hoc surveys: Leavers between			*15 per cent. survey Between June 1984 and March 1985*	*100 per cent. survey Between April 1985 and January 1986*
	April 1983 and November 1983	*April 1983 and March 1984*	*April 1984 and July 1984*		
Percentage and bracketed numbers of respondents:					
In full-time work with same employer	4	12	22	24	28 (56663)
In full-time work with different employer	34	37	34	31	24 (48776)
In part-time work	[1]	[1]	2	1	4 (7211)
On full-time course at college/training centre	4	1	2	3	3 (6407)
Back at school	2	[2]	[2]	[2]	[1]
In another YTS scheme	29	13	4	6	6 (12864)
Doing something else	3	3	2	2	4 (8906)
Unemployed	24	34	34	32	27 (54939)
Sample details					
Usable Response percentage	53	55	69	63	58 (195,766)
Sample size	1962	2715	3637	63,737	338,973
Percentage respondents who were early leavers	100	90	64	54	43

[1] Information.
[2] Means less than 0·5 per cent.

Young Persons

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what meetings have been held between officials or Ministers in his Department and voluntary sector representatives to discuss *(a)* the proposals put forward by Youthcall and *(b)* any similar initiative; when they took place; and who was present.

Mr. Trippier: The Paymaster General met representatives of Youthcall last November to discuss their ideas for a voluntary community service scheme for young people. There have been subsequent meetings between Youthcall and officials of the Department to explore their ideas further.

Community Programme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to the answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *364*, regarding the 2,500 respondents to the second community programe follow-up survey, and for each given long-term unemployed category, number and percentage in employment at the time of the survey, if he will now show the absolute number and the approximate percentage or proportion who were unemployed less than a year at their time of joining the community programme; and if he will set out the information in tabular form.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is in the table.

	Age on entry to community programme			
	18-20	*21-24*	*25 and over*	*All*
Total in employment	219	201	337	757
of which unemployed for less than one year:				
Number	118	106	148	371
Proportion	54	53	44	49

Labour Statistics

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each constituency in Great Britain the number of unemployed claimants at May 1986 who were aged under 25 years and the proportion of total unemployment they represented.

Mr. Trippier: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants aged under 25 years and the proportion of total unemployment they represent in each constituency of Great Britain at April 1986. (An age analysis of unemployment is not available for May 1986).

Claimants aged under 25-years

Constituency	*Number*	*Percentage*
Luton South	2,202	34·3
Mid Bedfordshire	1,023	32·9
North Bedfordshire	1,680	36·0
North Luton	1,601	35·0
South West Bedfordshire	1,351	33·0
East Berkshire	1,083	31·7

Constituency	*Number*	*Percentage*
Newbury	866	32·1
Reading East	1,529	36·9
Reading West	1,346	38·1
Slough	1,342	28·8
Windsor and Maidenhead	670	26·2
Wokingham	570	27·9
Aylesbury	873	33·0
Beaconsfield	548	30·1
Buckingham	874	30·2
Chesham and Amersham	525	28·8
Milton Keynes	2,271	32·5
Wycombe	933	33·0
Bexhill and Battle	636	29·2
Brighton Kemptown	1,670	34·0
Brighton Pavilion	1,703	34·3
Eastbourne	1,072	31·0
Hastings and Rye	1,797	34·6
Hove	1,458	31·3
Lewes	778	28·5
Wealden	606	30·1
Basildon	2,227	33·7
Billericay	1,089	28·3
Braintree	1,277	34·8
Brentwood and Ongar	727	28·8
Castle Point	1,003	28·4
Chelmsford	1,072	32·9
Epping Forest	1,004	32·7
Harlow	1,629	36·2
Harwich	1,609	32·7
North Colchester	1,623	37·4
Rochford	812	27·3
Saffron Walden	726	30·3
South Colchester and Maldon	1,729	37·1
Southend East	1,618	33·1
Southend West	1,147	31·2
Thurrock	1,871	32·0
Aldershot	1,151	37·8
Basingstoke	1,178	36·5
East Hampshire	823	32·8
Eastleigh	1,416	32·0
Fareham	1,162	34·6
Gosport	1,586	39·4
Havant	1,974	35·8
Isle of Wight	2,515	36·2
New Forest	662	29·1
North West Hampshire	881	35·9
Portsmouth North	1,776	36·6
Portsmouth South	3,038	39·2
Romsey and Waterside	1,173	34·0
Southampton Itchen	2,454	36·6
Southampton Test	2,013	34·8
Winchester	748	34·7
Broxbourne	895	29·4
Hertford and Stortford	699	29·6
Hertsmere	783	28·6
North Hertfordshire	1,158	32·2
South West Hertfordshire	661	28·3
St Albans	789	33·0
Stevenage	1,550	37·9
Watford	1,022	31·7
Welwyn Hatfield	995	33·0
West Hertfordshire	1,088	31·6
Ashford	1,453	36·5
Canterbury	1,453	33·2
Dartford	1,180	32·4
Dover	1,591	34·5
Faversham	1,965	36·2
Folkestone and Hythe	1,725	35·9
Gillingham	1,792	34·7
Gravesham	1,793	35·0
Maidstone	1,381	37·1
Medway	1,878	36·2
Mid Kent	1,664	33·9
North Thanet	1,870	33·4
Sevenoaks	748	30·1
South Thanet		31·4
Tonbridge and Malling	971	32·4

Constituency	*Number*	*Percentage*
Tunbridge Wells	900	31·7
Banbury	1,159	34·9
Henley	563	31·1
Oxford East	1,668	40·1
Oxford West and Abingdon	975	33·7
Wantage	715	33·0
Witney	886	32·9
Chertsey and Walton	588	28·1
East Surrey	505	30·7
Epsom and Ewell	578	29·3
Esher	407	27·0
Guildford	677	31·6
Mole Valley	395	26·3
North West Surrey	733	32·7
Reigate	590	28·6
South West Surrey	507	30·1
Spelthorne	668	27·4
Woking	696	28·4
Arundel	1,053	30·8
Chichester	855	32·8
Crawley	818	30·4
Horsham	663	27·9
Mid Sussex	580	28·1
Shoreham	626	26·1
Worthing	863	29·4
Cambridge	1,175	34·0
Huntingdon	1,294	33·8
North East Cambridgeshire	1,630	34·2
Peterborough	3,110	37·5
South East Cambridgeshire	682	32·8
South West Cambridgeshire	885	32·7
Great Yarmouth	2,480	38·0
Mid Norfolk	1,106	32·5
North Norfolk	1,166	31·3
North West Norfolk	1,902	35·9
Norwich North	1,481	36·8
Norwich South	2,411	38·8
South Norfolk	1,012	31·5
South West Norfolk	1,503	33·3
Bury St. Edmunds	1,210	34·3
Central Suffolk	1,118	34·3
Ipswich	1,657	35·9
South Suffolk	1,240	33·9
Suffolk Coastal	862	30·9
Waveney	1,939	33·7
Barking	1,281	31·7
Battersea	2,251	33·5
Beckenham	1,111	33·0
Bethnal Green and Stepney	2,014	25·5
Bexley Heath	745	28·8
Bow and Poplar	2,627	32·0
Brent East	2,330	33·9
Brent North	1,013	31·0
Brent South	2,339	34·7
Brentford and Isleworth	1,267	29·2
Carshalton and Wallington	937	29·7
Chelsea	1,154	28·7
Chingford	863	31·3
Chipping Barnet	625	28·9
Chislehurst	704	30·3
Croydon Central	1,329	36·4
Croydon North East	1,317	33·3
Croydon North West	1,400	34·1
Croydon South	573	27·4
Dagenham	1,389	31·1
Dulwich	1,703	35·4
Ealing North	1,106	28·4
Ealing Acton	1,492	30·5
Ealing Southall	1,980	33·3
Edmonton	1,347	31·5
Eltham	1,334	35·9
Enfield North	1,181	31·8
Enfield Southgate	1,005	34·4
Erith and Crayford	1,406	32·4
Feltham and Heston	1,504	30·6

Constituency	Number	Percentage
Finchley	961	32·6
Fulham	1,825	32·4
Greenwich	1,775	35·9
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	3,467	35·2
Hackney South and Shoreditch	3,828	35·0
Hammersmith	2,343	31·6
Hampstead and Highgate	1,900	30·2
Harrow East	1,071	29·4
Harrow West	772	28·3
Hayes and Harlington	897	30·2
Hendon North	875	29·6
Hendon South	935	31·6
Holborn and St. Pancras	2,746	30·4
Hornchurch	871	28·2
Hornsey and Wood Green	2,683	34·5
Ilford North	937	31·5
Ilford South	1,443	34·2
Islington North	3,249	33·9
Islington South and Finsbury	2,341	31·4
Kensington	1,746	30·5
Kingston-upon-Thames	765	29·9
Lewisham East	1,873	37·3
Lewisham West	2,130	38·3
Lewisham Deptford	3,190	39·0
Leyton	1,896	34·9
Mitcham and Morden	1,169	31·1
Newham North East	2,012	35·0
Newham North West	2,270	38·3
Newham South	1,999	34·5
Norwood	3,297	37·5
Old Bexley and Sidcup	593	29·1
Orpington	771	31·3
Peckham	3,505	37·6
Putney	1,282	31·6
Ravensbourne	671	31·2
Richmond-upon-Thames and Barnes	774	28·5
Romford	936	31·2
Ruislip—Northwood	387	22·4
Southwark and Bermondsey	2,615	34·2
Streatham	2,401	36·3
Surbiton	458	29·8
Sutton and Cheam	671	29·1
The City of London and Westminster South	1,291	25·5
Tooting	2,134	36·7
Tottenham	3,752	37·8
Twickenham	623	26·2
Upminster	887	27·6
Uxbridge	835	31·3
Vauxhall	3,874	36·1
Walthamstow	1,370	32·5
Wanstead and Woodford	677	29·9
Westminster North	2,484	29·7
Wimbledon	851	30·4
Woolwich	2,285	35·9
Bath	1,372	36·4
Bristol East	1,664	32·8
Bristol North West	1,641	32·5
Bristol South	2,418	32·8
Bristol West	2,314	34·9
Kingswood	1,208	30·3
Northavon	1,197	34·8
Wansdyke	993	31·5
Weston-super-Mare	1,553	34·8
Woodspring	850	28·2
Falmouth and Camborne	1,995	31·4
North Cornwall	2,034	35·0
South East Cornwall	1,313	32·8
St. Ives	1,710	30·1
Truro	1,657	35·3
Exeter	1,994	39·8
Honiton	1,008	30·7
North Devon	1,365	32·3
Plymouth Devonport	1,936	37·1
Plymouth Drake	2,463	40·7
Plymouth Sutton	1,494	37·3
South Hams	1,284	29·9
Teignbridge	1,269	30·9
Tiverton	924	32·6
Torbay	2,293	35·4
Torridge and West Devon	1,278	30·4
Bournemouth East	1,912	34·0
Bournemouth West	1,453	32·8
Christchurch	642	25·9
North Dorset	721	29·4
Poole	1,262	29·7
South Dorset	1,445	36·4
West Dorset	637	30·2
Cheltenham	1,509	34·6
Cirencester and Tewkesbury	979	33·2
Gloucester	1,914	37·4
Stroud	1,233	32·7
West Gloucestershire	1,663	34·3
Bridgwater	1,497	34·3
Somerton and Frome	1,018	33·9
Taunton	1,343	33·4
Wells	1,023	32·3
Yeovil	1,072	33·2
Devizes	1,377	35·6
North Wiltshire	1,192	33·9
Salisbury	1,289	39·1
Swindon	2,564	35·3
Westbury	1,442	36·4
Bromsgrove	1,451	33·3
Hereford	1,528	34·3
Leominster	1,081	30·9
Mid Worcestershire	1,990	32·0
South Worcestershire	1,162	32·3
Worcester	1,516	31·7
Wyre Forest	1,914	35·2
Ludlow	1,231	31·0
North Shropshire	1,510	34·3
Shrewsbury and Atcham	1,537	35·5
The Wrekin	3,334	33·8
Burton	1,863	37·7
Cannock and Burntwood	1,957	35·9
Mid Staffordshire	1,783	39·4
Newcastle-under-Lyme	1,363	32·9
South East Staffordshire	1,862	33·1
South Staffordshire	1,892	35·6
Stafford	1,709	40·2
Staffordshire Moorlands	1,105	32·9
Stoke-on-Trent Central	1,947	34·2
Stoke-on-Trent North	1,795	31·3
Stoke-on-Trent South	1,557	32·8
North Warwickshire	1,733	33·0
Nuneaton	1,706	33·1
Rugby and Kenilworth	1,589	36·0
Stratford-on-Avon	1,089	32·4
Warwick and Leamington	1,637	36·7
Aldridge-Brownhills	1,551	35·7
Birmingham Edgbaston	1,984	36·3
Birmingham Erdington	3,166	37·4
Birmingham Hall Green	2,252	35·5
Birmingham Hodge Hill	2,961	36·6
Birmingham Ladywood	3,959	39·9
Birmingham Northfield	3,084	35·3
Birmingham Perry Barr	3,112	36·6
Birmingham Small Heath	3,912	37·1
Birmingham Sparkbrook	3,492	35·6
Birmingham Yardley	1,925	35·5
Birmingham Selly Oak	2,478	36·4
Coventry North East	3,309	38·1
Coventry North West	1,920	37·0
Coventry South East	2,736	39·6
Coventry South West	1,768	37·5
Dudley East	2,717	32·9
Dudley West	2,215	32·4
Halesowen and Stourbridge	1,543	29·0
Meriden	2,625	35·5
Solihull	1,176	31·3
Sutton Coldfield	1,237	33·1

Constituency	Number	Percentage
Walsall North	2,785	34·4
Walsall South	2,510	33·9
Warey East	2,634	37·1
Warley West	2,120	34·7
West Bromwich East	2,153	35·4
West Bromwich West	2,375	33·0
Wolverhampton North East	3,270	37·4
Wolverhampton South East	2,588	35·7
Wolverhampton South West	2,332	36·9
Amber Valley	1,403	31·6
Bolsover	1,826	36·1
Chesterfield	2,132	36·3
Erewash	1,782	33·6
Derby North	2,020	38·5
Derby South	3,215	40·6
High Peak	1,421	35·1
North East Derbyshire	1,810	34·7
South Derbyshire	1,509	36·2
West Derbyshire	984	34·6
Blaby	897	31·9
Bosworth	1,072	31·1
Harborough	778	32·0
Leicester East	1,811	32·1
Leicester South	2,545	34·6
Leicester West	2,419	34·3
Loughborough	1,213	35·4
North West Leicestershire	1,130	27·8
Rutland and Melton	1,122	33·9
East Lindsey	2,034	33·5
Gainsborough and Horncastle	1,457	34·9
Grantham	1,620	33·2
Holland with Boston	1,470	33·6
Lincoln	2,622	37·7
Stamford and Spalding	1,124	32·3
Corby	1,866	32·8
Daventry	960	32·3
Kettering	1,049	32·9
Northampton North	1,776	35·1
Northampton South	1,409	33·3
Wellingborough	1,433	34·6
Ashfield	1,712	32·9
Bassetlaw	2,332	39·4
Broxtowe	1,293	32·3
Gedling	1,423	35·8
Mansfield	1,998	37·6
Newark	1,778	37·9
Nottingham East	3,769	38·1
Nottingham North	2,860	39·2
Nottingham South	2,468	37·3
Rushcliffe	1,297	35·2
Sherwood	1,644	37·6
Beverley	1,258	35·0
Booth Ferry	1,663	36·1
Bridlington	1,876	35·4
Brigg and Cleethorpes	2,484	38·8
Glanford and Scunthorpe	2,319	34·2
Great Grimsby	2,828	39·4
Kingston upon Hull East	3,143	38·4
Kingston upon Hull North	3,424	38·7
Kingston upon Hull West	2,992	39·9
Harrogate	1,168	33·9
Richmond	1,391	34·9
Ryedale	1,030	32·1
Scarborough	1,997	37·4
Selby	1,357	38·5
Skipton and Ripon	846	31·2
York	2,532	41·6
Barnsley Central	2,389	36·9
Barnsley East	2,333	37·5
Barnsley West and Penistone	2,211	35·8
Don Valley	2,833	35·3
Doncaster Central	3,064	39·0
Doncaster North	3,554	38·9
Rother Valley	2,286	35·5
Rotherham	2,875	39·7
Sheffield Central	4,281	42·0
Sheffield Attercliffe	2,536	39·7
Sheffield Brightside	3,507	42·6
Sheffield Hallam	2,193	44·4
Sheffield Heeley	3,092	41·5
Sheffield Hillsborough	2,377	39·3
Wentworth	2,505	36·7
Batley and Spen	2,000	36·3
Bradford North	2,626	34·3
Bradford South	2,310	36·3
Bradford West	3,147	36·3
Calder Valley	1,386	32·4
Colne Valley	1,470	35·0
Dewsbury	2,132	38·0
Elmet	1,300	34·5
Halifax	2,191	36·3
Hemsworth	2,140	36·1
Huddersfield	2,228	40·5
Keighley	1,316	32·1
Leeds Central	2,868	36·8
Leeds East	2,847	37·0
Leeds North East	1,796	37·2
Leeds North West	1,626	39·1
Leeds West	2,200	36·9
Morley and Leeds South	1,803	36·1
Normanton	1,316	32·4
Pontefract and Castleford	2,405	38·2
Pudsey	1,134	33·4
Shipley	1,189	32·8
Wakefield	2,063	36.2
City of Chester	2,186	38·7
Congleton	1,063	34·8
Crewe and Nantwich	1,827	38·4
Eddisbury	1,905	37·9
Ellesmere Port and Neston	2,485	37·9
Halton	3,326	41·1
Macclesfield	1,110	34·5
Tatton	1,308	36·7
Warrington North	2,827	41·4
Warrington South	2,396	38·9
Altrincham and Sale	1,139	34·5
Ashton-under-Lyne	1,823	35·9
Bolton North East	1,858	33·9
Bolton South East	2,428	36·8
Bolton West	1,877	36·3
Bury North	1,681	36·6
Bury South	1,635	35·6
Cheadle	903	34·1
Davyhulme	1,774	37·1
Denton and Reddish	2,055	34·1
Eccles	2,112	36·4
Hazel Grove	1,183	33·6
Heywood and Middleton	2,071	34·1
Leigh	2,616	41·9
Littleborough and Saddleworth	1,390	35·8
Makerfield	2,607	39·2
Manchester Central	4,453	37·7
Manchester Blackley	2,564	37·8
Manchester Gorton	2,588	36.8
Manchester Withington	2,758	38·9
Manchester Wythenshawe	2,803	40·2
Oldham Central and Royton	2,112	34·3
Oldham West	1,658	35·1
Rochdale	2,224	33·0
Salford East	3,275	36·5
Stalybridge and Hyde	2,042	34·6
Stockport	1,692	35·4
Stretford	3,678	40·1
Wigan	2,946	39·5
Worsley	2,265	36·8
Blackburn	2,702	35·5
Blackpool North	2,148	36·8
Blackpool South	2,355	38·3
Burnley	2,076	34·4
Chorley	1,603	34·1
Fylde	1,110	37·0
Hyndburn	1,478	36·3
Lancaster	1,229	35·1
Morecombe and Lunesdale	1,492	35·9

Constituency	Number	Percentage
Pendle	1,588	32·7
Preston	2,931	37·7
Ribble Valley	786	36·4
Rossendale and Darwen	1,615	33·7
South Ribble	1,616	35·9
West Lancashire	2,762	38·1
Wyre	1,326	31·7
Brikenhead	3,640	35·7
Bootle	4,229	37·4
Crosby	1,995	36·1
Knowsley North	3,806	38·9
Knowsley South	4,252	41·0
Liverpool Broadgreen	3,333	37·9
Liverpool Garsten	3,294	40·6
Liverpool Mossley Hill	2,882	37·8
Liverpool Riverside	4,559	38·1
Liverpool Walton	3,973	36·5
Liverpool West Derby	3,872	39·6
Southport	1,777	35·3
St. Helens North	2,543	36·8
St Helens South	2,937	37·6
Wallesey	2,773	36·5
Wirral South	1,391	33·5
Wirral West	1,497	33·2
Barrow and Furness	1,628	39·1
Carlisle	1,689	39·3
Copeland	1,615	37·3
Penrith and the Borders	1,273	36·2
Westmorland and Lonsdale	798	35·1
Workington	1,538	33·6
Hartlepool	3,276	35·0
Langbaurgh	2,955	36·2
Middlesbrough	4,336	39·2
Redcar	3,474	39·3
Stockton North	3,334	35·7
Stockton South	2,875	37·2
Bishop Auckland	2,665	35·5
City of Durham	1,720	37·4
Darlington	2,231	36·4
Easington	2,284	37·4
North Durham	2,631	36·6
North West Durham	2,071	32·9
Sedgefield	1,912	37·1
Berwick-upon-Tweed	1,251	35·4
Blyth Valley	1,696	32·3
Hexam	866	34·7
Wansbeck	1,773	35·3
Blaydon	1,809	35·1
Gateshead East	2,683	36·5
Houghton and Washington	2,964	34·5
Jarrow	2,693	32·5
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central	2,372	39·3
Newcastle-upon-Tyne East	2,653	34·8
Newcastle-upon-Tyne North	2,637	38·5
South Shields	2,661	34·3
Sunderland North	3,989	34·8
Sunderland South	3,204	36·4
Tyne Bridge	3,792	38·5
Tynemouth	2,387	35·1
Wallsend	3,063	35·0
Alyn and Deeside	1,601	34·9
Clwyd North West	2,134	38·0
Clwyd South West	1,414	37·0
Delyn	1,811	32·9
Wrexham	1,776	36·0
Carmarthen	1,331	33·6
Ceredigion and Pembroke North	1,390	32·8
Llanelli	1,798	36·1
Pembroke	2,552	33·9
Blaenau Gwent	2,211	38·0
Islwyn	1,581	36·2
Monmouth	1,296	35·7
Newport East	1,930	37·5
Newport West	2,216	38·4
Torfaen	2,227	38·5
Caernarfon	1,300	32·7
Conwy	1,495	37·6

Constituency	Number	Percentage
Meirionnydd nant Conwy	740	34·3
Ynys Mon	1,880	36·5
Bridgend	1,430	34·2
Caerphilly	2,459	39·2
Cynon Valley	1,718	37·5
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	2,510	43·8
Ogmore	1,798	34·9
Pontypridd	1,991	40·0
Rhondda	2,426	43·6
Brecon and Radnor	926	34·6
Montgomery	643	30·5
Cardiff Central	2,570	39·9
Cardiff North	917	34·3
Cardiff South and Penarth	2,066	35·4
Cardiff West	2,247	36·2
Vale of Glamorgan	1,979	36·8
Aberavon	1,872	39·5
Gower	1,405	38·1
Neath	1,643	37·1
Swansea East	2,269	37·3
Swansea West	2,401	38·8
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	630	32·5
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	600	34·3
Clackmannan	1,732	37·4
Falkirk East	2,067	37·7
Falkirk West	1,856	38·4
Stirling	1,818	43·1
Dumfries	1,586	39·1
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	1,415	36·7
Central Fife	2,120	35·4
Dunfermline East	1,936	37·9
Dunfermline West	1,517	40·5
Kirkcaldy	1,768	34
North East Fife	923	35·9
Aberdeen North	1,539	39·0
Aberdeen South	1,155	34·9
Banff and Buchan	1,154	34·8
Gordon	788	33·7
Kincardine and Deeside	747	36·1
Moray	1,577	38·2
Caithness and Sunderland	767	34·0
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	2,058	33·0
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	1,520	31·8
East Lothian	1,464	36·8
Edinburgh Central	2,082	40·6
Edinburgh East	1,877	40·0
Edinburgh Leith	2,664	39·7
Edinburgh Pentlands	1,437	39·3
Edinburgh South	1,715	42·2
Edinburgh West	920	37·1
Linlithgow	2,099	35·5
Livingston	2,009	38·6
Midlothian	1,519	34·9
Argyll and Bute	1,196	32·5
Ayr	1,797	35·5
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,325	34·4
Clydebank and Milngavie	1,748	37·6
Clydesdale	1,913	38·8
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,912	39·8
Cunninghame North	2,068	37·6
Cunninghame South	2,363	36·8
Dumbarton	2,335	39·4
East Kilbride	1,881	37·5
Eastwood	1,304	38·3
Glasgow Cathcart	1,711	38·9
Glasgow Central	2,641	35·9
Glasgow Garscadden	2,578	41·2
Glasgow Goven	2,292	36·9
Glasgow Hillhead	2,170	40·0
Glasgow Maryhill	3,201	40·2
Glasgow Pollock	3,239	42·1
Glasgow Provan	3,964	43·9
Glasgow Ruthergien	2,575	37·1
Glasgow Shettleston	2,419	37·4
Glasgow Springburn	3,441	39·3

Constituency	Number	Percentage
Greenock and Port Glasgow	3,184	36·0
Hamilton	2,644	40·3
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2,160	37·8
Monklands East	2,680	43·0
Monklands West	2,182	43·1
Motherwell North	2,719	42·3
Motherwell South	2,245	41·0
Paisley North	2,019	35·5
Paisley South	2,201	39·0
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	1,392	37·2
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	1,443	38·7
Angus East	1,647	40·1
Dundee East	3,014	37·5
Dundee West	2,527	38·2
North Tayside	1,032	35·2
Perth and Kinross	1,464	36·6
Orkney and Shetland	501	32·0
Western Isles	531	29·0

TRANSPORT

Air Traffic Control Centres (Public Access)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the Civil Aviation Authority plans to introduce greater control over the access of outsiders to air traffic control centres.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority exercises its responsibility for air traffic control through the National Air Traffic Services. Instructions already existed banning the presence of unauthorised visitors to NATS air traffic control units. However, in the light of the Accidents Investigation Branch report on the recent incident, I am informed by the CAA that NATS has, in addition, issued an instruction to all its air traffic control units, banning the presence of visitors in close proximity to controllers at their work positions.

Air Traffic (Safety)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has plans to improve safety measures at Heathrow airport following the Accident Investigation Board's report of a dangerous incident involving two British Airways jets on 29 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take following the publication by the accident investigation bureau's report into the airliner near-miss incident over Stanmore on 29 July last.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through the National Air Traffic Services, for all traffic control.

The incident reported upon by the Accident Investigation Branch resulted from human error on the part of an individual controller with a previously impeccable record. This individual was withdrawn from duty to be subjected to a period of retraining followed by re-examination and has, as a result, been passed fit to resume normal duties.

The CAA has informed me that the control procedures relating to the flight paths of aircraft approaching Heathrow have been thoroughly reviewed and confirmed to be satisfactory.

In the light of the report, NATS instructions which already forbade the admission of unauthorised visitors have been strengthened by a further instruction banning the close proximity of visitors to air traffic controllers at their working positions. In addition, the chairman of the CAA is urgently considering whether there is any further remedial action that needs to be taken.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements the Civil Aviation Authority makes for the control of air traffic over Greater London; what resources are devoted to this task; what steps the Civil Aviation Authority takes to ensure that the system is safe and efficient; when the system was last reviewed and updated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) fulfills its responsibilities for air traffic control through the National Air Traffic Services. In the London area, air traffic control is exercised by the NATS from the London air traffic control centre at West Drayton and the control tower at Heathrow.

I am informed by the CAA that the services are provided by highly trained and licensed air traffic controllers, whose equipment is provided and maintained by professional engineering staff. This equipment includes modern radar facilities, extensive navigation aids for the routing of aircraft and instrument landing systems to guide aircraft on to the runway under the direction of air traffic control.

All the CAA's air traffic controllers undergo some four years of training before being qualified to operate in all control positions. They have to pass written, practical and oral examinations in basic air traffic control and in the special procedures of the unit in which they are employed. After qualifying, they continue to be subject to a process of continuous checking by a local competency examiner. If at any time the local competency examiner is not fully satisfied with a controller's work that controller may be withdrawn and subjected to retraining and re-examination. Such retraining and re-examination invariable occurs in the event of any incident that has called the controller's competence seriously into question.

Mandatory reporting procedures ensure that any shortcomings in personnel, operations or equipment are brought to the attention of the CAA for remedial action. In particular, the mandatory reporting procedures for airmisses include full investigation by the joint airmiss working group. This group includes independent representatives of pilots and aircraft operators, and they assess the risk and make recommendations. The accidents investigation branch has the right whenever it thinks appropriate to undertake its own investigation.

BR (Financial Targets)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport, what effect the new financial targets for British Rail will have on *(a)* passenger rail fares in Scotland, *(b)* freight tariffs in Scotland, *(c)* the track mileage operated by British Rail in Scotland and *(d)* the number of personnel employed by British Rail in Scotland.

Mr. David Mitchell These are all detailed matters for the British Railways Board. However, as we have already made clear to the House, suggestions that our new objectives for the board will result in swingeing average

fares increases or sweeping service cuts are alarmist nonsense. Our objectives will secure improved quality services from a secure network at better value for money.

M40 (Birmingham-Oxford)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects construction work to begin on the M40 Birmingham to Oxford extension.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Work on the first section between M42 and Warwick should begin in the summer of 1987.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a timetable for construction of the M40 extension from Birmingham to Oxford.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Work should begin in the summer of 1987 with the whole route open to traffic by the end of 1990.

Buses (PSV Test)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date his Department will be in a position to provide statistics on the percentage of privately owned buses that failed their annual public service vehicle test in the year 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If the hon. Member lets me know exactly what statistics he requires, I will let him have them within a few days.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress that has been made on providing the finance for the Channel tunnel project; and what discussions his Department has had with institutions and pension funds on this financing operation.

Mr. David Mitchell: Eurotunnel has announced that its private placing of shares has been satisfactorily completed. The Government naturally followed Eurotunnel's progress in raising these funds, and there were regular contacts with Eurotunnel's advisers. But my Department has had no contact with any of the institutions or pension funds which took part in the private placing.

Blind People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to take orange badges away from registered blind people.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no such plan. The current review of the orange badge scheme is looking at a variety of suggestions made to us about the best way to balance the interests of all concerned.

Road Traffic Offences

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that records are kept, and subsequently made available to the public, which will show the type and make of the vehicles involved in road traffic offences.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested could be provided only at disproportinate cost. Statistical information on road traffic offences is collected centrally from records of court proceedings which do not always include details of the vehicles involved.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 3 November 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Wright Memoirs

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General what representations Her Majesty's Government have made, directly or through its agenices, to *(a)* the Australian Government and *(b)* the Australian security intelligency organisation concerning the publication of the Wright memoirs in Australia.

The Attorney-General: Her Majesty's Government have asked the Australian Government it they would consider participating in the proceedings before the Supreme Court of New South Wales which I have brought against Heinemann Australia Pty Limited and Peter Wright for an order restraining the publication of Peter Wright's manuscript.

RUC Report

Mr. Holt asked the Attorney-General if he will ask the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland to make available to hon. and right hon. Members an abridged version of the report on the Royal Ulster Constabulary by Mr. Colin Sampson, with appropriate deletions on security grounds; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No. I affirm the answer to this House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 23 October 1986 at column 948 when he said that, as is the usual practice with police reports covering criminal investigations, the report on the Royal Ulster Constabulary by Mr. Colin Sampson will not be published.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Brent Education Authority

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all the official communications he or his officials have had with Brent education authority over the last three months.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department is in frequent contact with local education authorities on a range of educational matters. Recent correspondence with Brent education authority has included two requests for it to state the reasons for the continuing suspension from her headship of Miss Maureen McGoldrick. In the light of its replies, my right hon. Friend has asked the authority to give urgent consideration to Miss McGoldrick's reinstatement.

Teachers (Pensions)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will set out the relationship between the United Kingdom steering committee on local government superannuation and the teachers superannuation working party;

(2) how his Department is represented on the United Kingdom steering committee on local government superannuation; and how often his Department consults the steering committee on issues affecting teachers' pensions.

Mrs. Rumbold: The United Kingdom steering committee on local government superannuation is an ad hoc body established by the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to advise those associations on matters related to the superannuation of local authority employees. A representative of the steering committee attends meetings of the teachers superannuation working party. My Department is not represented on UKSC but consults the appropriate parent organisations ACC and AMA as a matter of course on proposed changes to the teachers' superannuation regulations.

Colleges of Advanced Education

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria are proposed for colleges of advanced education to gain access to the polytechnic central admission system.

Mr. Walden: In proposing the admission of certain colleges of higher education to the polytechnics central admission system, the Department's criteria are as follows:

Eligible colleges would have no access to a clearing house and would be offering

(a) more than one degree course to be covered by PCAS;

(b) degree courses of a non-specialist nature;

(c) degree courses which could not reasonably be expected to recruit through the central registration and clearing house, pending a merger of the latter with PCAS.

Institutions already using CRCH were excluded except where their non-initial teacher training courses fell under category *(c)*.

I understand that the PCAS board is to decide in January whether extension to those colleges meeting these criteria can take place, following a review of experiences obtained during its first full cycle of admissions in 1985-86.

Notices of Complaint

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) for each school which has complied with a notice of complaint issued in 1985, section 71, Education Act 1944, what steps that school took in order to comply with the notice;

(2) out of those schools which were served with a notice of complaint in 1985 under section 71 of the Education Act 1944, which have *(a)* closed, *(b)* had the period for compliance with the notice extended and *(c)* complied with the terms of the notice;

(3) if he will list those schools which were served with a notice of complaint in 1985 under section 71 of the Education Act 1944.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is as follows:

School	Subject of complaint	Outcome
St. Nicholas Preparatory School, Birmingham	Accommodation and instruction	Following an appeal to the Independent Schools Tribunal, period for complaince still current
Faith Christian Academy, Suffolk	Accommodation and instruction	Complaints met
Life Christian School, London	Premises, accommodation and instruction	School closed
Shekinah Christian School, London	Premises, accommodation and instruction	Complaints met
Newcourt Christian School, London	Premises, accommodation and instruction	Period extended for full compliance

Foreign Languages

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many universities or polytechnics offer degrees in French; and if any steps are being taken to reduce this number.

Mr. Walden: Information from the educational counselling and credit transfer information service showed that in 1986-87 37 universities in Great Britain and six polytechnics in England offered degrees in French and French studies. My right hon. Friend is not aware of any steps to reduce this number.

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students, of British birth, graduated from a British university with a degree showing fluency in *(a)* Chinese, *(b)* Japanese and *(c)* Arabic in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: In 1985, there were 48 and 93 students with United Kingdom domicile, who obtained a first degree from universities in Great Britain in Chinese languages and studies and in Oriental, Asian and African languages and/or studies, respectively. Separate information for Japanese and Arabic are not available.

Polytechnics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence is available to him of the number of students who, in the current academic year, accepted polytechnic places and subsequently chose to go to university when offered lower entry qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I understand that this information — which is the property of the Universities Central Council for Admissions and of the Polytechnics Central Admissions System—is not currently available.

WALES

Mentally Ill Patients

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects secure facilities for the treatment of mentally ill patients to become available in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A site option appraisal to determine the most suitable locations for medium secure therapeutic units in Wales has been undertaken, and the necessary public consultation will take place as soon as possible.

Radiation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what information he has concerning radiation readings for food and livestock in south Wales following the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident;

(2) what readings are taken as a matter of course for radiation in food and livestock in the south Wales area.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There has been an ongoing monitoring programme covering agricultural produce throughout the Principality since the Chernobyl accident. Produce tested in south Wales includes milk and milk products, cereals, fruit, vegetables and meat. The results of these tests have been published regularly and copies placed in the Library of the House. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food undertakes on behalf of the Department an aquatic environment monitoring programme and its report, issued in early October, includes results obtained following the Chernobyl accident. A copy of this report has also been placed in the Library of the House. We have also commenced a more comprehensive terrestrial radioactivity monitoring programme around nuclear establishments throughout England and Wales and the first report of this programme will be issued in due course.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

World Bank

58. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the president of the World Bank; and what was discussed.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether representatives of his Department have met the new president of the World Bank.

Mr. Chris Patten: I had the pleasure of meeting the new president of the World Bank on 20 October, when he made his first official visit to London. Mr. Conable also called on my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Among the subjects discussed were the possibility of a new general capital increase for the bank, the current negotiations about the eighth replenishment of the International Development Association, and the environmental aspects of the bank's development projects and programmes.

Transportation Systems (Aid)

59. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of aid to African nations is designated for development of transportation systems.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1985, 19 per cent. - some £18·7 million - of our project aid for Africa was spent on the transport and communications sector. In addition we financed 87 man-years of expert and volunteer work in the same sector.

Surplus Foods

60. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had as to the potential future use for aid purposes of surplus foods now in storage in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government are working for agreement on a substantial reform of the European Community food aid programme; if possible at the Development Council on 11 November. Reforms of the common agricultural policy are under active discussion in the Agriculture Council. We have been prominent in ensuring that the worldwide problem of surplus production is discussed in the new GATT round.

Sub-Saharan Africa

62. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of overseas aid is allocated to sub-Saharan African nations.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1985 an estimated total of £510 million was spent in sub-Saharan Africa through both multilateral and bilateral channels. This represented 40 per cent. of total aid expenditure.

64. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on co-ordination with other countries to help sub-Saharan African countries with their agricultural development programmes.

Mr. Chris Patten: We fully support the efforts being made by multilateral development organisations, by other bilateral donors, and by sub-Saharan African countries themselves to co-ordinate more effectively the assistance provided for agricultural development programmes.

United Nations Children Fund

63. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met officials of the United Nations' Children's Fund; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend the then Minister for Overseas Development met the executive director of UNICEF last March and discussed emergency programmes in Africa and the global immunisation campaign. I shall be meeting the deputy executive director, Dr. Richard Jolly, this Wednesday. I agreed on 8 October to contribute £1 million to support programmes in Mozambique and the immunisation programme in Botswana and Lesotho.

Front-line States

65. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to increase aid to the front-line states adjoining South Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: We maintain substantial programmes of assistance to Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, the front-line states adjoining South Africa. British aid to all the countries in the region is kept under review.

Aid Statistics

66. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how United Kingdom official aid as a share of gross national product compares with that provided by other member states of the Council of Europe; and if he will specifically list those member states which provide a lower level of aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1985, in terms of aid as a percentage of GNP, Britain ranked ninth out of the 14 donor countries of the Council of Europe. In absolute terms, we had the third largest programme. Donors providing less aid than Britain as a percentage of GNP were Italy, Switzerland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain.

Sudan

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to help relieve the famine in the Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have given substantial help to relieve famine in Sudan worth almost £35 million since late 1984. There is enough food in northern Sudan and harvest prospects are encouraging, but many are at risk in the south and we hope food airlifts by the International Committee of the Red Cross, to which we have pledged £250,000, will be resumed. We are ready to do more when conditions permit.

Liverpool Freeport (Falkland Islands Vehicles)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Overseas Development Administration will seek to obtain the vehicles and equipment from the Falkland Islands at present stored at Liverpool freeport and make them available for construction projects in the Third world.

Mr. Chris Patten: No. We, and recipient Governments, prefer to use competitively procured and fully guaranteed new equipment, because of the rist of incurring extra cost if equipment fails abroad.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Flags and Emblems Act

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what circumstances he would consider repealing the Flags and Emblems Act; and if he will detail the representations he has received against and in favour of such action.

Mr. Tom King: I am considering, in the context of a review of Public Order Law in Northern Ireland, whether the Act should be repealed.

Repeal has been advocated by nationalist spokesmen in Northern Ireland, and by the Irish Government, for a number of years on the basis that the Act is discriminatory and offensive to some sections of the community in Northern Ireland, and has also been recommended in the past by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, on the grounds that the Act is unnecessary for public order purposes.

Following speculation in the press over recent months, I have received a small number of letters some from people who apparently believe that the flying of the Irish tricolour is illegal and that repeal would legalise it and others from people who believe that repeal would make the display of the Union flag illegal; both groups are mistaken.

US (Financial Grant)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to modify the provision contained in the Northern Ireland Estimates for 1986-87 as a consequence of moneys granted by the United States Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to do so. The International Fund for Ireland, through which contributions from the United States of America and other donor nations will be channelled, has yet to be legally constituted. It would then be for the board of the fund once established to decide on the disbursement of fund monies. Implications for Northern Ireland Estimates cannot be determined in the absence of decisions by the board on allocations.

Departmental Running Costs

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the manpower and running costs of the Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office in 1986-87.

Mr. Tom King: I have reviewed the manpower and running cost requirements for Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office for 1986-87 and I have decided that the manpower target for the NI Departments should be increased from 24,900 to 25,510. The increase reflects, inter alia, needs in the social securtiy field; developments in information technology in NI Departments; the employment measures announced at the time of the Budget; and increased work loads in land registry, vehicle licensing and water leakage control. Taking account of these changes to manpower targets, I have also decided to increase the departmental running cost limit for Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office from £446 million to £446·9 million. The additional running costs will be offset by savings elsewhere in the Northern Ireland block and thus will not lead to any increase in public expenditure.

US Aid

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the money given to Her Majesty's Government by the United States Congress for expenditure in Northern Ireland has been spent, and on what purpose.

Mr. Scott: None. Under an agreement (Cmnd 9910) between the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and United States Governments the money is being held in trust until the international fund is legally established. This will only take place once the agreement establishing the fund (Cmnd 9908) has undergone the necessary parliamentary procedures in London and Dublin and the two Governments have exchanged notifications of its acceptance.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government has any plans to declare a new fishing zone around the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Renton: I refer the right hon. Member to the statement my right hon. and learned Friend made to the House on 29 October at columns 323-333.

International Year of Peace

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures have been taken or are proposed by Her Majesty's Government to support the United Nations International Year of Peace.

Mr. Eggar: To mark the United Nations International Year of Peace, we have arranged for Sir Brian Urquhart, former Under Secretary-General at the United Nations, to deliver a lecture entitled "Whatever Happened to International Order?" at Chatham house on 12 November.

Restitution of Monetary Gold

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any meetings of the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold have taken place since his reply of 12 March, *Official Report*, column 515.

Mr. Renton: No.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the gold held by the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold has so far been used to meet the expenses of the commission.

Mr. Renton: The information requested by the hon. Member is not at present available. I will write him as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the statement of 23 October, *Official Report*, column 1299, if there are any proposals to revise the twin track communiqué of 12 December 1979 to incorporate a declaration coupling any agreement between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact on long-range INF systems with constraints on short-range systems.

Mr. Renton: The Alliance has always insisted that an agreement on longer-range INF missiles should include appropriate constraints on Soviet shorter-range INF missiles. That remains the objective of the United States in the Geneva negotiations.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he has received from outside Her Majesty's Government concerning Her Majesty's Government's general ability to monitor the maintenance of the ABM treaty in the light of the statement of 23 October, *Official Report*, column 1295, that detailed matters of ABM treaty interpretation are not matters for Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Renton: None.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards a negotiated removal of ground-launched cruise missiles without reference to Soviet Srink missiles.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara).

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received against the removal of ground-launched cruise missiles in any arms control deal along the lines proposed at the Reykjavik summit.

Mr. Renton: None. We remain in very close contact with our allies about these issues and fully support the United States' efforts at Geneva to pursue the outline agreement on INF reached at Reykjavik.

Falkland Islands (Fishing Limits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of the common fisheries policy on the new Falkland Islands fishing limits.

Mr. Renton: The common fisheries policy does not apply to the Falkland Islands. It has no implications for the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone other than by virtue of the Community's competence for external fisheries matters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with representatives of the Soviet Government on the question of fisheries limits around the Falkland Islands, and when.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. and learned Friend said in the House on 29 October, the question of south Atlantic fisheries has been raised several times with the Soviet Union in the course of the last six months. He sent a message to the Soviet Foreign Minister explaining our decision to establish the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone. This was delivered in Moscow on 29 October.

Visas

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state, for each country whose nationals require visas to visit the United Kingdom, and for each year since 1980 (i) how many applications were made for visas, (ii) how many applicants were called for interview, (iii) what is the mean waiting time between receipt of an application and approval or rejection, (iv) how many applications were rejected and (v) what criteria are used in deciding to reject an application.

Mr. Waddington: I have been asked to reply.

Information on applications for a visa to visit the United Kingdom for nationals of countries who were

required before 15 October 1986 to have such a visa is not available centrally, except in respect of Sri Lankan citizens. Information in Sri Lankan citizens in Sri Lanka granted and refused such a visa is given in the following table for the period since 30 May 1985, when the visa requirement took effect. Information on applications received, applicants called for interview and waiting times is not available centrally. Applications for visas are decided in accordance with the criteria for admission given in the immigration rules (HC 169 as amended).

Applications by Sri Lankan citizens in Sri Lanka for a visa to visit the United Kingdom.

Period	*Number of Persons*	
	Applications granted	*Applications refused*
30 May to December 1985	4,190	260
January to September 1986	4,700	300

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Intellectual Property

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what organisations have made representations in support of the introduction of legislation pursuant to the White Paper on intellectual property and innovation.

Mr. Pattie: About 90 organisations have made representations in support of such legislation.

Post Office

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of profits made in excess of those implied by the financial target have been paid by the Post Office to Her Majesty's Government in each year since 1980.

Mr. Pattie: All post-tax profits earned by the Post Office's postal business in the years since 1980 have been retained within the business but cash surpluses required by the external financing limits set by the Government, although retained within the business's balance sheet, have been loaned to other parts of the public sector. In the years from 1980-81 to 1985-86, cash surpluses totalled £316·5 million compared with aggregate negative external financing limits of £256·8 million.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to publicise to retailers the information that certain solvents can be abused in a manner similar to glue.

Mr. Howard: The Department of Health and Social Security has issued guidelines for shop managers listing the type of product liable to be abused by sniffing, in a manner similar to glue. In addition, Re-Solv, the charity set up by the industry, has issued guidelines to retailers which also list these products. Finally, the Department of Trade and Industry is co-sponsoring a video training film for retailers and their staff which covers the types of product likely to be sniffed. Copies of the two sets of guidelines have been placed in the Library.

South Africa

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any restrictions will be placed on the export to South Africa of vehicles and equipment at present in Liverpool freeport sold at the forthcoming auction.

Mr. Alan Clark: Restrictions would only apply in this case in respect of any goods subject to the provisions of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985 as amended.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any restrictions will be placed on the export to Argentina of vehicles and equipment at present in Liverpool freeport and to be sold at the forthcoming auction.

Mr. Alan Clark: No restrictions are placed on exports to Argentina other than for those goods subject to the provisions of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985 as amended.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) where the Government stockpiles of manganese ore, ferromanganese, ferrochrome, vanadium pentoxide and ferrovanadium are located; and what is their present content in metric tonnes by metal content;

(2) from whom the materials in Her Majesty's Government's stockpiles of manganese ore, ferromanganese, ferrochrome, vanadium pentoxide and ferrovanadium were purchased; to whom they have been sold; in what quantities; and for how much;

(3) what purchases and sales have been made for and from Her Majesty's Government's stockpiles of manganese ore, ferromanganese, ferrochrome, vanadium pentoxide, and ferrovanadium since the establishment of these stockpiles in 1983;

(4) whether Her Majesty's Government entered into consultation with *(a)* the British Steel Corporation and *(b)* any private steel producer regarding the formulation of contingency plans to deal with the possible interruption of supplies of manganese ore, ferromanganese, ferrochrome, vanadium pentoxide and ferrovanadium from the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member on 7 July 1986 at columns 11 and 12 concerning the Government's policy on the maintenance of supplies of strategic minerals. The situation continues to be closely monitored, in consultation with the companies in those sectors of industry concerned, including the steel industry.

The materials included in the stockpile reflect industry's requirements, and were purchased from commercial sources. The Government's intention to dispose of one quarter of the contents of the stockpile, announced on 25 July 1986, has been realised through sale by open tender. It is the Government's policy not to confirm details of the location, content or value of the stockpile given the need to protect its physical security and the commercially sensitive nature of the information concerned.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what import quotas and duties are imposed by Britain on imports of iron ore, manganese ore, ferromanganese, ferrochrome and vanadium pentoxide from *(a)* Canada, *(b)* Australia, *(c)* Sweden, *(d)* Zimbabwe, *(e)* the Republic of South Africa, *(f)* Finland and *(g)* China.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are no quantitative restrictions or duties on the import of the named products from Sweden or Finland as members of EFTA. As for imports from the other named countries there are no quantitative restrictions on any of these; there are no duties on imports of iron ore or manganese ore; and there are duties of 4 per cent. on ferro manganese, 8 per cent. on ferrochromium and 5·5 per cent. on vanadium pentoxide, with duty-free quotas applying to imports of ferrochromium and duty-free entry applying to imports of vanadium pentoxide from Zimbabwe and China under the generalised system of preference.

Lawn Mowers

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the additional costs which will be required to be borne by the lawn mower manufacturing industry in consequence of the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Hereford Bye Street Gate Sculptures

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the present position in respect of the consideration by the reviewing committee on the export of works of art on the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures.

Mr. Alan Clark: The reviewing committee on the export of works of art has determined that the statues meet the "Waverley" criteria of national importance. The application for an export licence is under consideration and a decision will be taken as soon as possible.

Northern Region

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will pay an official visit to the northern region to assess the effects of Government regional policies.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend visited the north-east region two weeks ago and intends to do so again early next year.

Albania

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the level of United Kingdom trade with Albania; and what information he has as to how this compares with trade between other member states of the European Economic Community and Albania.

Mr. Alan Clark: In 1985, United Kingdom exports to Albania totalled £5·3 million, and imports £0·2 million.

Comparison with European Community countries is in the following table.

United Kingdom Trade with Albania

OTS basis £ '000

	Exports	*Imports*
1985	5,252	212

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics—1985 yearbook.

European Community Countries' Trade with Albania—1985

US$ '000

	Exports	*Imports*
United Kingdom	6,804	276
Belgium/Luxembourg	2,304	2,460
Denmark	348	72
France	16,896	14,616
F R Germany	15,684	13,332
Greece	8,544	2,544
Ireland	3	—
Italy	20,280	14,724
Netherlands	5,280	4,380
Portugal	36	—
Spain	504	5,280

Source: OECD Series 'A' and 'C'

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether any of the plutonium separated during the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel in the United Kingdom has at any stage since May 1979 been exported under ownership different from that under which it was produced or imported into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will detail each occasion since May 1979, on which changes of ownership of plutonium have occurred whilst in storage in any form in the United Kingdom, indicating (i) the date, (ii) the quantity involved, (iii) the original ownership, (iv) any subsequent ownership, (v) the quantity exported, (vi) the date on which exported, (vii) the ownership under which exported, (viii) the country and organisation to which exported and (ix) the chemical and physical form in which exported;

(3) if he will publish an inventory of plutonium stock held by the United Kingdom, dealing with countries and organisations which own any plutonium here, and the quantities each own.

Mr. Goodlad: Plutonium derived from the reprocessing of civil spent nuclear fuel is allocated between owners by British Nuclear Fuels plc pro rata to the estimated quantities of plutonium in incoming fuel. Since May 1979, all such separated plutonium has been stored or exported under safeguards by BNFL in accordance with the company's contractual agreements with the owners.

Details of BNFL's contractual arrangements with individual organisations are commercially confidential.

Coal and Oil Industries

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the statistics for the number of deaths that have occurred each year for the preceding five years in coal mining and oil drilling operations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Figures for fatalities in the coal industry are contained in the National Coal Board's report and accounts 1985-86, and for oil drilling operations in the "Brown Book" (Development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom 1986), copies of both of which have been placed in the Library of the House. Since those documents were published, there have been a further three fatalities in the oil industry and eight in the coal industry.

Nuclear Power Industry

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many people are presently employed in the nuclear power industry; how much is invested in the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 13 June 1986 at column. *343*, about 44,000 are employed directly by BNFL, UKAEA, NNC and in the nuclear-specific work of the generating boards. Well over 100,000 jobs depend directly or indirectly on the industry. During the financial year 1985-86 about £1,100 million was invested in our commercial nuclear installations, most of which was spent with United Kingdom industry. In terms of current orders, BNFL alone has overseas contracts worth in excess of £2·5 billion.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column 8, whether he will publish the companies and communities in which the 2,796 new jobs have been created; and how many of these jobs have been taken by men, women and former employees of British Coal.

Mr. Hunt: This is a matter for British Coal. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply of 9 May, *Official Report*, column 266, he will make a statement on the outcome of Her Majesty's Government's review of emergency plans and procedures for implementation in the event of threat from nuclear fallout in the light of the Chernobyl incident; and whether she will publish details of the findings.

The Prime Minister: The review is not yet complete.

Security Commissions

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister who appoints persons to the Security Commission; for how long they are appointed; how many members consider any individual case; how many persons are now available to serve in any individual case; if any part of the consideration of any individual case is conducted in public; if any part of a Security Commission report or recommendations are made public; what is the Government's policy towards accepting any recommendations made by the Security Commission; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Appointments to the Security Commission are made by the Prime Minister. Members are normally appointed for terms of three years and may be reappointed for a further term or terms. The commission comprises seven members from which a panel of three or four, including the chairman, are chosen to serve on each inquiry. The commission conducts its inquiries in private. Its findings are published as far as this is consistent with the requirements of national security. All recommendations made by the commission in recent years have been accepted by the Government.

SCOTLAND

Trunk Road Programme

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the criteria he employs in order to establish priorities in the trunk road programme.

Mr. Ancram: Available resources are concentrated on those schemes which promise the greatest benefits taking into account strategic, economic, environmental, engineering and safety factors. The timing of trunk road schemes may also, of course, be dependent on other considerations such as the acquisition of land or the need to tie in works with associated local authority road schemes.

Service Personnel (Housing)

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those local authorities which currently do not make special provisions for the housing of former service personnel in accordance with the guidance given in Circular 107/1975.

Mr. Ancram: I understand that the majority of local authorities in Scotland have responded favourably to the circular by according some measure of housing priority to service personnel, but the information held by the Scottish Development Department on individual local authority allocation policies is not complete. District councils are responsible for allocation policies for their areas and I refer my hon. Friend directly to the local authorities in which he is interested.

Ayr Road Route

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current timetable for the construction of the Ayr road route (A77).

Mr. Ancram: Subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the availability of finance, work is expected to start on the trunk road section towards the end of 1989. However, this depends on Strathclyde regional council starting work on its section of the route in 1988-89 as stated in its transport policies and programmes.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to establish city technology colleges in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many city technology centres he proposes to establish in Scotland;

(3) whether he is considering any locations within the area of Eastwood, Renfrew and Glasgow district councils for the establishment of city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I believe that provision of broad but soundly based technological and vocational education for young people can be effectively pursued in Scotland through the technical and vocational education initiative. There are no plans at present to supplement the initiative by establishing centres specialising in technology, but we shall keep under review the need for and opportunities of doing so.

Nazi War Criminals

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the presence of alleged Nazi war criminals in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such representations.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the hourly rate of overtime for the various ranks of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the Police Regulations 1979, police officers of ranks up to and including chief inspector are eligible for overtime. Officers may elect to be paid for the overtime which they work or to take time off in lieu. Pay for duty performed on a rostered rest day cancelled at less than 29 days' notice is at a rate of basic pay plus a half; pay for duty performed on a public holiday is at twice basic pay; and paid overtime worked at any other time is reimbursed at basic pay plus a third. The current hourly rates of police overtime are set out in the table.

Table of overtime rates with effect from 1 September 1986

Rank	*Annual basic pay*	*Overtime rate per hour*		
		Time + one third	*Time + half*	*Double time*
	£	£	£	£
Constable	7,752	4·953	5·572	7·430
	8,289	5·296	5·958	7·944
	9,756	6·233	7·013	9·350
	9,987	6·381	7·179	9·572
	10,317	6·592	7·416	9·888
	10,671	6·848	7·670	10·227
	11,013	7·037	7·916	10·555
	11,355	7·255	8·162	10·883
	11,691	7·470	8·404	11·205
	12,372	7·905	8·893	11·858
	12,936	8·265	9·299	12·398
Sergeant	12,372	7·905	8·893	11·858
	12,936	8·265	9·299	12·398
	13,389	8·555	[illegible]	12·832
	13,836	8·840	[illegible]	13·261
	14,193	9·069	10·202	13·603
Inspector	14,958	9·557	10·752	14·336
	15,375	9·824	11·052	14·736
	15,918	10·171	11·442	15·256
	16,407	10·483	11·794	15·725
	16,887	10·790	12·139	16·185
Chief Inspector	16,887	10·790	12·139	16·185
	17,304	11·056	12·438	16·585
	17,748	11·340	12·758	17·010
	18,222	11·643	13·098	17·465
	18,693	11·944	13·437	17·916

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of hours overtime worked in the Metropolitan police in each year since 1979; and what is the average annual income of Metropolitan police officers from overtime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information about the number of hours of paid overtime worked each year since 1978-79 is set out in the table. The average income of Metropolitan police officers of ranks eligible for overtime from overtime payments in the financial year 1985-86 was £1,913.

Hours of overtime worked by officers of the Metropolitan Police, 1979-80 to 1985-86

Financial year	*Hours*
1979-80	8,696,026
1980-81	6,939,249
1981-82	8,421,719
1982-83	7,144,110
1983-84	7,673,945
1984-85	9,849,618 [1](7,462,642)
1985-86	6,509,242

[1] The figure in parenthesis excludes the mutual aid provided to other forces as a result of the NUM dispute.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what study he has made of possible financial savings which could be obtained by civilianising police posts; what results he expects from extra police officers being recruited; and how will they be monitored.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend's announcement on 20 May of decisions on police manpower followed a review of the needs for additional police officers which

took into account the scope for civilianisation. That review showed that additional civilian staff should enable at least 650 police officers in provincial forces to be released for operational duties through civilianisation over the next few years, together with 400 in the Metropolitan police.

The recruitment of additional civilian staff to replace police officers carrying out duties which do not require the powers and training of a police officer is a cost-effective way of increasing the number of officers available for operational duty.

It does not normally lead to financial savings.

The results expected from the recruitment of additional police officers will depend on the specific purposes for which they are used. We expect to see an increase in the number of officers on patrol, in crime prevention initiatives such as neighbourhood watch, and on other priority demands. The Department will be keeping in touch with provincial forces, through Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, and with the Metropolitan police to monitor the results achieved.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his Department's objections to having Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary scrutinise the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Hurd: As explained in the Government's response (Cmnd. 9917) to the 45th report of the Public Accounts Committee on the financial control and accountability of the Metropolitan police, we regard it as essential to maintain the direct relationship between the Home Secretary and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. We have accepted the recommendation of the Committee that the present arrangements for inspecting the Metropolitan police should be reviewed, and have set up a working party to report on this.

Crime Statistics

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the level of crime in Brixton; and if he will ask the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to revise upwards his allocation of police in Brixton.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This year my right hon. Friend has received letters from the community police consultative group for Lambeth and from four members of the public about crime in Brixton.

The deployment of manpower is a matter for the Commissioner. He has given Brixton and the surrounding areas a high priority in recent years in recognition of the special problems there. I understand that the strength of the former 'L' district, which included Brixton division, rose from 835 to 1,056 between June 1981 and September 1986.

Prisons (Detention)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) with respect to prisoners serving life sentences for offences other than murder, if he will explain in greater detail than in the statement of 30 November 1983 by his predecessor, the significance he attaches to the demands of retribution and deterrence, and the procedure for consulting the Lord Chief Justice and the trial judge as to the minimum period of detention necessary to satisfy those demands;

(2) what is the form of the question that he poses to the Lord Chief Justice and the trial judge when he initially consults them as to the period of detention that is necessary to satisfy the requirements of retribution an deterrence in the case of a discretionary life sentence prisoner, and, in particlar *(a)* if they are invited to indicate the fixed-term sentence that would have been passed on a prisoner to reflect the gravity of his offence had he been sentenced to a fixed-term rather than an indeterminate sentence and *(b)* if they are invited to indicate the period of detention that the prisoner would have served had he been sentenced to a fixed-term sentence rather than an indeterminate sentence; and if he himself applies either or both criteria when determining the period of detention necessary to satisfy the requirements of deterrence and retribution;

(3) when considering parole, if he seeks and receives from the Lord Chief Justice and the trial judge a specific indication as to the number of years that they each think that a prisoner serving a discretionary life sentence should serve;

(4) if, when considering parole, he treats the views of the Lord Chief Justice and the trial judge as to the requirements of retribution and deterrence as conclusive as to what those requirements are.

Mr. Hurd: I attach great importance to the demands of retribution and general deterrence in all life sentence cases. Life sentences are passed only when grave offences are committed and it would be wrong for any Home Secretary not to have regard to the retributive and deterrent elemens of the sentence in deciding when the prisoner should be considered for release on licence.

As indicated in my predecessor's statement of 30 November 1983, I look to the judiciary for advice on the length of detention necessary to satisfy the requirements of retribution and general deterrence in each individual case. The procedure which applies to all life sentence cases, irrespective of whether the life sentence is mandatory or discretionary is that the trial judge, if available, and the Lord Chief Justice are provided with a detailed memorandum on the offence and the prisoner's background, a copy of any letter sent to me by the trial judge after sentence and copies of the latest reports on the prisoner's conduct and progres in prison, and are asked to state their views on the case and on the period of detention necessary to meet the requirements of retribution and general deterrence. Usually, but not always, the views of the judiciary are expressed in terms of length of actual detention.

On the basis of the same information that was before the trial judge and the Lord Chief Justice and in the light of their views, the circumstances of the individual case, and having regard to my own wider responsibilities, I decide on the date of the first reference of the case to the local review committee as the first stage of a formal review by the Parole Board. In all cases, I take account of the views of the judiciary. They are not overriding, although I naturally attach great weight to them.

Syrian Students

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will revoke all leave given to Syrian students to permit them to study in the United Kingdom; and if he will refuse further such applications for the time being.

Mr. Waddington: Applications for leave to enter or remain are considered individually in accordance with the immigration rules. Following the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Syria, we are considering whether any further tightening of the immigration control in relation to nationals of that country is necessary in the interests of national security.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from the relevant chief constables as to the cost of the police operation at each of the four sites surveyed by NIREX under special development orders up to 1 October.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am asking the chief constables to let me have such information as is available and will write to the hon. Member.

Criminal Justice (White Paper)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all those organisations and individuals who have responded to the White Paper on Criminal Justice (Cmnd. 9658) and its associated discussion papers.

Mr. Mellor: The following organisations and individuals responded to some of the proposals in the White Paper and its associated discussion documents:

Association of British Insurers.
Association of Chief Officers of Probation.
Association of Chief Police Officers of England and Wales.
Association of County Councils.
Association of Directors of Social Services.
Association of Magisterial Officers.
Desmond Banks, Solicitors.
Banner Jones and Hawkins, Solicitors.
British Association of Social Workers.
British Juvenile and Family Courts Society.
British Psychological Society.
Cambridgeshire Probation Service.
Central Council of Probation Committees.
Chelmsford Magistrates Juvenile Panel.
Chief Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate.
Cheshire Social Services Department.
Children's Legal Centre.
Children's Society.
Conservative Backbench Home Affairs Committee.
Contract.
Council of Circuit Judges.
Coventry Intermediate Treatment Forum.
Coventry Reparation Scheme.
Criminal Bar Association.
Crypt Association.
Cumbria Probation Service.
Cumbria Social Services Department.
Essex Probation Service.
F.I.R.M. — Forum for Initiatives in Reparation and Mediation.
Forum for Intermediate Treatment in the West Midlands.
Gerard Avenue Project, Coventry.
Greater Manchester Council Police Committee.
Greater Manchester Probation Service.
Duncan Hartley and Co., Solicitors.
Howard League.
Inner London Juvenile Court Panel.
Inner London Probation Service.
Institute of Chartered Accountants.
Institute of Trading Standards Administration.
Chairman of the Interdepartmental Review of Road Traffic Law.
JUSTICE.
Justices' Clerks' Society.
Law Society.
Law Society of Scotland.
Leeds Reparation Scheme.
Lewisham Police Council.
London Boroughs Association.
London Borough of Newham.
London Intermediate Treatment Association.
London Magistrates' Clerks Association.
Magistrates' Association.
Methodist Church — Division of Social Responsibility.
Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Social Services Department.
Metropolitan Police.
Midland and Oxford Circuit Committee.
Miskin Project.
Montgomery Conservative Association.
National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders.
National Association of Probation Officers.
National Association of Senior Probation Officers.
National Association of Victim Support Schemes.
National Council for Civil Liberties.
National Council of Women of Great Britain.
New Approaches to Juvenile Crime.
North Yorkshire Social Services Department.
Office of the Comptroller and City Solicitor, City of London.
Parliamentary All-Party Penal Affairs Group.
Police Federation of England and Wales.
Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales.
Prison Governors Branch, Society of Civil and Public Servants.
Prison Reform Trust.
Prosecuting Solicitors' Society of England and Wales.
Rainer Foundation.
Sandwell Mediation Scheme.
Chairman of the Securicor Group, PLC.
Shooting Sports Trust Limited.
South Yorkshire Repatriation Scheme.
Steels, Solicitors.
Swindon Probation Office.
Talbot, Davies and Lopner, Solicitors.
Unit Trust Association.
Uxbridge Juvenile Court Panel.
Victim and Offender in Conciliation Group, Rochester YC.
West London Group for Homosexual Equality.
West Midlands Intermediate Treatment Association.
West Yorkshire Probation Committee.
Woodlands Intermediate Treatment Centre.
Wyrewide Association.
Young Barristers Committee.

In addition, 30 members of the public submitted comments.

Criminal Law (Codification)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with interested parties concerning Law Commission report 143, "Codification of the Criminal Law"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None. In its introduction to the report, the Law Commission seeks the views of the professions and the public on the proposals.

Civil Protection

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in monitoring the performance of local authorities in meeting their civil protection responsibilities; and when a report thereon will be made available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question on this subject from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 22 July at column 156.

That reply referred to a proposed rolling three-year programme for implementation of the 1983 Civil Defence Regulations. The programme was issued to local authorities on 30 October after consultation with the local authority associations. It sets out a timetable for systematic monitoring. A copy is in the Library of the House.

Police (Northamptonshire)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Northamptonshire as to the circumstances in which on Monday 20 October officers, out of uniform and hatless, in an unmarked car, on the M1 northbound stopped a woman driving alone and did not immediately offer visual or verbal proof of their identity; and if he will make a statement on the substance of the report.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The enforcement of road traffic law, including the policy on the use of unmarked vehicles, is a matter for individual chief officers of police. I understand that in this case the officers made use of the police vehicle's blue flashing lights and two tone horn to stop a driver suspected of exceeding the speed limit, and that the officers were wearing uniform.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the circumstances and conditions in which remand prisoners, including Tracy Armstrong, a constituent of the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch, are being kept a week at a time in cells at magistrates' courts, including those at Lavender Hill magistrates court and Highbury Corner magistrates court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Some untried prisoners are having to be held in police cells in London because of lack of places to accommodate the untried population. We are continuing to take vigorous action to tackle this problem. Among recent or current developments are the transfer of prisoners to other parts of the country, an increase in the capacity of Brixton, an increase in the number of untried prisoners held at Pentonville and the introduction of units for untried prisoners at Feltham and Rochester youth custody centres. We have also reached broad agreement with the Prison Officers Association at Holloway on an internal reorganisation which will progressively increase its capacity sufficiently to accommodate all London female untried prisoners.

We are conscious that police cells are not designed for holding prisoners for extended periods and that prisoners accommodated there do not receive the full range of privileges available in prison. Nevertheless, the police are doing all they can to provide the best possible conditions in very difficult circumstances.

Mr. Amanaullah Khan

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the case of Mr. Amanaullah Khan is to be considered by the Security Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: This case does not fall to be considered by the Security Commission. Mr. Khan has, however, exercised his option to appear before my panel of advisers in cases involving deportation on grounds of national security and I understand that arrangements are being made for a hearing as soon as possible.

Visas

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action a person with a visa to visit the United Kingdom is required to take in the United Kingdom if they wish to extend their permission to visit the United Kingdom; if representations from hon. Members will be considered in such a circumstance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: A visa holder admitted to the United Kingdom as a visitor may apply for an extension of his stay in accordance with the provisions of the immigration rules. Representations by hon. Members on such applications are taken into account in the normal way.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when a person with a visitor's visa is refused entry to the United Kingdom, what information is given to the passenger about their rights of appeal; in what languages such information is available; whether such a passenger is detained or granted temporary admission pending appeal; what rights to make telephone calls such passengers are given; what information about rights to independent representation is available and in what languages; what independent advice is available to such passengers from independent advice agencies at ports of entry; how soon after entry appeals are held; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: When a passenger who holds a valid visa is refused leave to enter the country, he is given a written notice, in English, of his right of appeal, which he may exercise before departure. The immigration service informs the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service of all such cases. If the passenger does not understand English, the notice and the appeal procedures are explained to him in his own language. He has access to a telephone. Under the Immigration Act 1971, a passenger who has been refused entry is liable to detention but most of those who remain here for an appeal hearing are instead granted temporary admission. The hearing is normally a few weeks after refusal.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange for nationals of countries subject to visa control, settled in the United Kingdom, who are advised by his Department to obtain visa exemption stamps to avoid difficulties on re-entry to the United Kingdom, to obtain such stamps from immigration officers on departure from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to enable persons travelling abroad to obtain visa exemption stamps at air and sea ports.

Mr. Waddington: Immigration officers automatically stamp the passports of eligible passengers entering the United Kingdom to show that they are exempt from a visa requirement. Passengers whose passports have not been so endorsed on entry or while in this country may obtain exempt endorsement where adequate arrangements can be made to establish exemption.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when an overseas national who requires a visa to visit the United Kingdom arrives in the United Kingdom without a visa, what minimum time they will be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom before removal from the United Kingdom; what access to a public telephone will be given to such passengers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: How soon it is practicable to remove passengers refused leave to enter the country depends on the circumstances.

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 28 October, from what countries the families to be tested by DNA originate; on what criteria the families are being selected; how many families, to date, have been selected; when families selected will be notified of that selection; if hon. Members whose constituents have been selected, or are selected, will be notified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The arrangements for the proposed trial using DNA testing in a sample of immigration cases are still being developed. Some cases will be selected on a random basis; some will be people who have already volunteered. The families who will be invited to participate have not yet been selected. It will be for individual applicants to decide if they wish to approach an hon. Member.

Mr. Vanunu

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has of the departure of Mr. Vanunu from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: I have no such evidence. Anyone who has evidence that any offence was committed should of course at once inform the police.

Breathalyser

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to announce a decision on the continuation of the blood test option for drivers subjected to a Lion Intoximeter 3000 breathalyser test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend intends to make an announcement shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

Manpower Services Commission

Sir Peter Mills asked the Paymaster General why so many frequent changes are made in civil servants working for the Manpower Services Commission in the south-west of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission has recently undergone a period of rapid growth as a result of new and expanded initiatives such as job clubs, restart and the job training scheme. The commission has had to arrange a considerable number of personnel moves in order to ensure that these important initiatives, are adequately and properly staffed.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Paymaster General why the Manpower Services Commission will not allow the various agencies in the south-west of England to have more freedom in their work and monitor the results.

Mr. Trippier: I understand my hon. Friend is referring to the schemes run under the community programme.

The revised controls for the community programme, introduced on 1 April 1986 as a result of a report by Coopers and Lybrand Management Consultants, include recommendations about the financial management of agencies. Prior to an agency being approved, Manpower Services Commission officials have to ensure that management controls are adequate, making recommendations as appropriate. The frequency and nature of monitoring undertaken depends upon the effectiveness of the controls operated by the agency management.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General how many community employment programme and community programme managing agents or sponsors have been excluded from schemes in the following area manpower board areas: Birmingham/Solihull, Coventry/Warwickshire, Wolverhampton/Walsall, Sheffield/Rotherham, Nottinghamshire, Trafford/Salford, central Manchester, inner Liverpool, outer Liverpool, London north-east, London north, London south and west and London south-east.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what was the annual expenditure of the Manpower Services Commission in each year since 1976 for the following area manpower boards; and what is the projected expenditure up to 1988; Birmingham/Solihull, Coventry/Warwickshire, Wolverhampton/Walsall, Sheffield/Rotherham, Nottinghamshire, Trafford/Salford, central Manchester, inner Liverpool, outer Liverpool, London north-east, London north, London south and west and London south-east.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to provide an answer to the historic and current parts of this question except at a disproportionate cost to the taxpayer. Details of projected expenditure in the areas covered by the specified area manpower boards in 1987-88 can not be ascertained until the total estimate provision for the Manpower Services Commission's grant-in-aid and for Department of Employment agency programmes delivered by the commission is settled for that year.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General how much has been paid by the Manpower Services Commission's north-east London area manpower board to target training workshop YTS in the current financial year; and what was the forecast budget for target training in the current financial year.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission has so far paid a total of £126,038 in grants to target training workshop YTS in the current financial year. The forecast budget for the workshop in the current financial year was £265,200 for grant aid, plus £12,650 for managing agent's fees and VAT.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list the major individual programmes, the individual

budgets and number of approved places allocated annually to the special temporary employment programme, the community employment programme and the community programme since 1978 in the following area manpower board areas: Birmingham/Solihull, Coventry/Warwickshire, Wolverhampton/Walsall, Sheffield/Rotherham, Nottinghamshire, Trafford/Salford, central Manchester, inner Liverpool, outer Liverpool, London north-east, London north, London south and west and London south-east;

(2) if he will list the number of approved places which have been allocated annually to the special temporary employment programme, the community employment programme and the community programme since 1978 in the following area manpower board areas: Birmingham/Solihull, Coventry/Warwickshire, Wolverhampton/Walsall, Sheffield/Rotherham, Nottinghamshire, Trafford/Salford, central Manchester, inner Liverpool, outer Liverpool, London north-east, London north, London south and west and London south-east;

(3) if he will list the agencies and sponsors employing long-term unemployed people under the community programme; how many approved places each agency and sponsor has; and how many of their places are filled for the following area manpower boards: Birmingham/Solihull, Coventry/Warwickshire, Wolverhampton/Walsall, Sheffield/Rotherham, Nottinghamshire, Trafford/Salford, central Manchester, inner Liverpool, outer Liverpool, London north-east, London north, London south and west and London south-east.

Mr. Lee: The information requested in these questions is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Employment Measures

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of community programme entrants in the 12 months to February 1986, April 1986 and July 1986; and what were the proportions of part-time participants who entered the programme in those 12-month periods.

Mr. Lee: The number of community programme entrants in the 12 months to February 1986, April 1986 and July 1986; and the percentage of part-time participants are as follows:

Twelve months ending	*Total entrants*	*Percentage of part-time entrants*
February 1986	231,671	85
April 1986	254,012	85
July 1986	280,406	86

Restart Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the total number of people leaving the unemployment register in connection with the restart scheme.

Mr. Lee: By 9 October, 71,506 had left the unemployment register after receiving a letter in connection with restart. Included in this figure are 30,218 people who left the register after being interviewed.

Jobstart Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the latest estimates of the numbers of people taking jobs under the jobstart scheme, the average level of gross earnings for such jobs and the distribution of jobstart earnings, in the same or similar format to that given in his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, columns *527-28*, also showing how many of the long-term unemployed were given restart interviews in the period covered by the estimates.

Mr. Lee: The restart programme was extended nationally on 1 July 1986, earlier in some areas. By 9 October, 366,451 people had been counselled. In the same period, 1,312 people started on the jobstart scheme. Information about wage levels is available for the first 965 of these participants. The average starting wage in that group was £64·69 per week.

The range of wages is shown in the table.

Wages (£ a week)	*Number*
0-39	35
40-49	57
50-59	147
60-69	266
70-79	460
Total	965

Work Availability Test

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will publish details and results of the strengthened availability for work test pilot exercise run from 16 June in 12 unemployed benefit offices.

Mr. Lee: The availability for work experiments were conducted in 12 unemployment benefit offices. In half the offices an experimental questionnaire was issued to all new claimants and in the other half the questionnaire was issued after six weeks unemployment. This was supplemented by interviews in some cases. The results were measured against a group of 12 "control" offices.

The results were:

	Experimental Offices	*Control Offices*
(a) New Claims Experiments		
Number of initial claim enquiries	14,059	14,467
Number of claims not pursued	1,077	586
(b) Six Week Experiments		
Number of Claimants reaching 6 weeks unemployment	4,731	6,317
Claims withdrawn within 2 weeks of issue of questionnaire	514	330
(c) Claims disallowed by the independent adjudication authorities on availability grounds (both experiments)	543	53
(d) Appeals against disallowance	59	4
(e) Appeals allowed	25	1

Some of those who did not pursue or withdrew their claims transferred to other venefits and in addition some claimants were helped towards re-employment opportunities through jobcentres.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list all those Department of Employment offices in which the new work availability test has been introduced;

(2) if he will list for each region and for each Department of Employment office in the region the date at which the new work availability test will be introduced.

Mr. Lee: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EEC Regulations

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Paymaster General, what estimate he has made of the additional employment which will be created in laboratories to be created under article 4 of the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has appointed nine existing test laboratories to examine, among other things, noise emissions from lawn mowers. We do not know, at this early stage, whether these bodies will need to appoint additional staff but it was never the purpose of the regulations to create jobs in this direct way and I hope they do not cause unnecessary public expense. The harmonisation of these standards should produce fair competition within the common market and prevent other countries from excluding products by producing unnecessarily stringent regulations. I hope that our manufacturers will be able to take advantage of the wider market that should result.

Career Development Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General (1) how many loans have been made under the career development scheme to date in each pilot area and in total;

(2) what is the total value of loans made under the career development scheme to date in each pilot area and the overall total value.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At 30 October 1986, the number and value of career development loans notified to my Department by participating banks for each of the four pilot areas and in total was as follows:

	Number of loans	*Value of loans* £
Aberdeen	26	50,494
Bristol & Bath	45	103,635
Greater Manchester	29	44,935
Reading & Slough	30	68,750
Total	130	267,814

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General how many loans of £500 to £1,000, £1,000 to £2,000, £2,000 to £3,000, £3,000 to £4,000 and £4,000 to £5,000 have been made under the career development scheme to date in each of the pilot areas and in total.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At 30 October 1986, the number of career development loans notified to my Department by the participating banks was as follows:

	Aberdeen	*Bristol/Bath*	*Greater Manchester*	*Reading/ Slough*	*Total*
£500-£1,000	13	13	17	10	53
£1,001-£2,000	2	7	4	6	19
£2,001-£3,000	6	15	5	5	31
£3,001-£4,000	2	4	1	3	10
£4,001-£5,000	3	6	2	6	17
All Values	26	45	29	30	130

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General how many loans have been made under the career development scheme in each pilot area and in total to date, the value of which lie between £300 and £500.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Six career development loans have been made at the previous lower limit of £500. I reduced the lower limit to £300 earlier this month following discussions with the participating banks, training providers and potential users of the scheme.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General how many applications for loans under the career development scheme have been made to date in each pilot area and in total to date; and, in each case, how many were rejected.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As at 30 October 1986, the total numbers of applications and formal rejections notified to my Department by participating banks for each of the four pilot areas and in total was as follows:

	Number of Career Development Loan applications	*Number of formal rejections*[1]
Aberdeen	48	22
Bristol & Bath	53	8
Greater Manchester	111	82
Reading & Slough	42	12
Total of 4 Areas	254	124

[1] The participating banks advise that a greater number have not proceeded with applications to the stage of formal rejection, but detailed statistics are not kept.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the career development scheme to date in each of the pilot areas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I hope that people who live in the four pilot areas of Aberdeen, Bristol/Bath, Greater Manchester and Reading/Slough, or who wish to train in these areas, will consider whether to take advantage of the career development loans. Some 130,000 leaflets have been distributed about this scheme and requests have been received for some 10,000 detailed information packs. Greater Manchester, with the largest population, has so far attracted most applications, but numbers are now also growing in the other three areas.

Jobcentres

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General whether teleprinters are now installed in all jobcentres; what is the cost of installing them; and what he estimates to be the cost of the operation of each such teleprinter per month.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Teletypewriter terminals are installed in all but the smallest 221 jobcentres, which do not merit the installation of a terminal because of low business volume. There are 1,080 terminals currently in use. The cost of installing each teletypewriter is £90 plus VAT on average. Monthly operational cost of each teletypewriter is £179 plus VAT excluding staff time.

Wages Act 1986

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General how progress towards achieving employment creation objectives of the Wages Act 1986 is to be monitored by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We will not be establishing any specific monitoring arrangements. In my opinion the orders of the unreformed wages councils were becoming so damaging to new job creation that the 1986 Act can only increase employment beyond what it would otherwise have been.

Agriculture (Back Injuries)

Miss Maynard asked the Paymaster General what information he has about the incidence of back injuries in agriculture; and what investigations are being carried out by his Department and the Health and Safety Executive into this question, with particular reference to back injuries and problems caused by the design of tractor seats.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall write shortly to the hon. Member and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Services Agency

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps will be taken during the proposed reorganisation of the Property Services Agency to ensure that there is no degradation in the level of service given to clients;

(2) what specific steps will be taken to ensure that the level of service given by the Property Services Agency to Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham, and United States Air Force at Fairford will be maintained if staff are relocated to Bristol; and what extra costs are estimated to be involved in maintaining this level of service in those circumstances.

Mr. Chope: I believe the reorganisation of PSA by shortening the chain of command will improve the service it gives to clients. At both Fairford and GCHQ the district works offices will be strengthened and will be directly responsible to the regional HQ at Bristol. There will be no significant change in the numbers and level of professional and technical staff available but they will be better organised. We have the support of our clients for these changes.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government has any plans to seek to amend or repeal the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Tracey: A review of policy for the provision of gipsy sites under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 is at an advanced stage. Consultations have taken place and we hope to announce the conclusions before long.

Poilution

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will rank, in descending order, the information available to him on the total emissions for each of the last 10 years of *(a)* sulphur oxides, *(b)* carbon monoxide and *(c)* hydrocarbons.

Mr. Waldegrave: The data requested are contained in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics," published annually by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The latest edition, Number 8, is available in the Library. Total emission data for sulphur oxides are given in table 2.4, and for carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons in table 2.7.

Eastern District Distributor Road, Leicestershire

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet able to announce whether the eastern district distributor road is to be included in the approved structure plan for the county of Leicestershire.

Mr. Tracey: The modifications which the Secretary of State proposes to make to the submitted alterations to the plan will be published in the near future. There will then be an opportunity for representations to be made on them to my right hon. Friend before he makes his final decision on the plan.

EEC Directives

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to implement the European directive on environmental assessment; whether he intends to make use of existing powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1972 with a view to implementing the directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Member states are required to take the measures necessary to comply with the directive by 2 July 1988. Proposals for meeting its requirements were set out in a consultation paper issued in April of this year, copies of which are in the Library. It is intended to make full use of existing powers and procedures under town and country planning legislation, but a few new provisions will be required. Responses to the consultation paper are being considered, and it is too early to say when the necessary orders under the European Communities Act 1972 are likely to be made.

Birmingham (Urban Development Agency)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about proposals made to him by Birmingham city council and the private sector for an urban development agency.

Mr. John Patten: Birmingham city council and representatives from the private sector presented outline proposals to my right hon. Friend on 30 July 1986. I look forward to seeing details of the alternative proposals which the city have been discussing with the private sector as soon as they are available.

Housing Finance

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the housing investment programme allocation for Leeds city council for each of the last three years.

Mr. Tracey: The initial housing investment programme allocations for Leeds city council for 1986-87, 1985-86 and 1984-85 were £22.345 million, £24,826 million and £29,016 million respectively. HIP allocations do not provide a measure of the scale of a council's capital programme since they ignore the significant spending power available from capital receipts.

Liverpool Freeport (Falkland Islands Vehicles)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many vehicles from the Falkland Islands are at present stored at Liverpool freeport prior to their disposal by auction;

(2) what was the total cost to public funds of the vehicles and equipment from the Falkland Islands at present stored at Liverpool freeport prior to disposal by auction;

(3) how many of the vehicles from the Falkland Islands at present stored at Liverpool freeport prior to disposal by auction have never been in use;

(4) what was the total cost of transporting the vehicles and equipment at present stored at Liverpool freeport from the Falkland Islands to Liverpool;

(5) when he proposes to commence the auction of the vehicles and equipment from the Falkland Islands at present stored at Liverpool freeport; and over how many days he anticipates the auction will last;

(6) if British buyers will be allowed to bid in the auction of vehicles and equipment from the Falkland Islands at present stored at Liverpool freeport.

Mr. Chope: At the conclusion of the Mount Pleasant airport project the contractor, the Laing-Mowlem-ARC joint venture sold its surplus plant and equipment to a company which arranged and paid for transporting to the United Kingdom. This company has now arranged an auction at Liverpool, which is open to prospective buyers worldwide.

The original cost of the plant formed part of the total contract price agreed with LMA.

Rate Poundage

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total rate rise in poundage and percentage terms, at ratepayer level, in every local authority in England between 1981-82 and 1986-87, whole period, ranked from biggest increase to smallest increase, by class.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed the available information in the Library.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether local authorities which sell land or buildings previously used for educational purposes to trusts running city technology colleges will be permitted to retain and use all the proceeds from such sales without penalisation through the rate support grant.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986, c. 69]: Such receipts would be treated in the same way as any other capital receipt.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Chapman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much is paid in income tax by those whose earnings place them in the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers; and if he will estimate the additional yield from increasing income tax rates on people with such earnings by (i) 10 per cent. and (ii) 20 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The top 5 per cent. of taxpayers (counting a married couple as one) are expected to pay about £12 billion in income tax in 1986-87. If higher rates of tax were increased by (i) 10 percentage points and (ii) 20 percentage points, they would pay additional tax of (i) £1·3 billion and (ii) £2·5 billion respectively. These estimates make no allowance for possible behavioural changes which might result from increased higher rates. They also assume no change to the basic rate of tax.

VAT (Housing)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate how much revenue would be raised by the imposition of value added tax at 15 per cent. on new houses other than council houses.

Mr. Brooke: The question is hypothetical and it is difficult to make an accurate estimate of such a major change. However, bearing these reservations in mind, it is estimated that the net additional full year revenue of imposing value added tax at 15 per cent. on private new housing would be about £575 million (at 1986-87 prices).

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish information available to him on the rank in descending order of the gross domestic product per head of the top 30 countries in the world for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will publish information available to him in descending order of the gross domestic product per head of the top 30 countries in the world for each year since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: Information for the OECD member states is available in the OECD publication "National Accounts, Main Aggregates, Volume 1, 1960-1984". Wider coverage is given by the United Nations publication "National Accounts Statistics, Main Aggregates, 1982". Both volumes are available in the House of Commons Library.

For ranking countries in terms of gross domestic product per capita, there are no fully comparable

worldwide data. The official date available for some countries are in terms of gross domestic product; for others they are in terms of net material product. In making comparisons between countries using gross domestic product and those using net material product, extreme caution must be exercised.

Infraction Proceedings

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the European Court to announce its decision in the matter of infraction proceedings under the European Economic Community sixth directive.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir George Young) in replying to the Adjournment debate on 25 July at column 923.

VAT (Scottish Borders)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement on the steps taken to date to publicise his decision to downgrade the Borders Customs and Excise value added tax advisory functions presently provided in Galashiels;

(2) what reductions in the provision of advice on value added tax will occur as a result of the decision to withdraw Her Majesty's Customs and Excise value added tax services from Galashiels to the regional office in Edinburgh;

(3) whether he will reconsider his decision to remove to Edinburgh the value added tax advisory service currently offered to the business community in the Borders area; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what estimate has been made of the effect on value added tax revenues from the Borders area after value added tax advisory services are withdrawn from the local Customs and Excise office in Galashiels;

(5) what savings he expects to accrue as a result of the withdrawal of locally provided value added tax advice by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers in Scotland after implementation of the forthcoming changes agreed in September 1985.

Mr. Brooke: The arrangements by Customs and Excise for providing an inquiry service to the business community and the public was reviewed as part of the Government's programme aimed at improving efficiency in the Civil Service. The recommendations which were accepted by the Government are intended to provide a more comprehensive and effective service rather than achieve specific savings. The inquiries will be channelled to a limited number of main Customs offices and dealt with by trained staff. Details of the offices providing information will be shown in the local telephone directories. The revised arrangements are not expected to have any effect on the VAT revenue.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made of the ability of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to maintain a regular programme of visits to local business men in the Borders after the implementation of the withdrawal of the value added tax advisory service to Edinburgh.

Mr. Brooke: The changes proposed to the Customs and Excise public inquiries service will not affect the programme of control visits to registered VAT traders.

Privatisation

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what selection procedure is used to obtain legal and financial advice from sources outsider Her Majesty's Government in connection with privatisation proposals.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

Transport Act 1985

4. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had recent discussions with local authority representatives concerning the impact of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I meet various local authority representatives from time to time, to discuss matters which include the Transport Act 1985.

British Airports Authority

5. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport at what recent price he intends to sell the British Airports Authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The price at which BAA plc shares will be sold will depend on a number of factors including market conditions at the time of the offer for sale.

Bus Industry

6. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress of de-regulation in the bus industry.

Mr. Moore: Deregulation has got off to a very good start. Service levels have been very largely maintained, new forms of service, particularly minibuses, have been introduced, and there have been substantial savings in subsidy, thanks to the introduction of competitive tendering.

Lorry Ban, London

7. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what monitoring is now being undertaken by his Department of the effects of the night-time and week-end lorry ban in London.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Responsibility for the ban rests with the London boroughs, including measuring its effects.

Settle-Carlisle Railway

10. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has discussed with the chairman of British Railways the preservation of the Settle-Carlisle railway line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It would be premature to discuss the detailed case for retaining this line in advance of receiving either BR's financial case or the TUCC's report. I expect to receive both documents before the end of the year.

London Regional Transport

13. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on revenue subsidies to London Regional Transport.

Mr. Moore: London Regional Transport is to be congratulated on reducing the burden of revenue subsidies to £97·4 million last year. It virtually achieved in one year the target reduction to £95 million for which we gave it three years. This has allowed for increased investment to improve the system. £234 million was spent last year to which we contributed grant of £198 million; this year the target for investment is increased to £261 million and capital grant goes up to £216 million. At the same time the burden on London's ratepayers has been reduced from 10·8p in the pound last year to 9·79p in the pound this year.

Efficiency has not been won by cutting services. The volume of bus services has been maintained and underground services are being increased to cater for record levels of patronage. We have just approved £45 million investment in additional trains.

15. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of London Regional Transport staff.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has had no meetings with representatives of London Regional Transport staff since taking up his appointment.

30. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend sees Dr. Bright from time to time. Their last meeting was at the London Passenger Transport Group on 22 July. My own most recent meeting with Dr. Bright was on 14 October.

32. **Mr. Snape** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with London Regional Transport management concerning service levels.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. These are the responsibility of management.

24. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects London Regional Transport to publish its business plan for 1987-88.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that London Regional Transport proposes to publish its business plan for 1987-88 in December.

37. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what developments have occurred on London Regional Transport since the capital's transport systems were recovered from Greater London council control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport's record has been one of success. The underground services have achieved record levels of patronage, while bus patronage has been stabilised after many years of decline. More efficient management has reduced the operating subsidies required to less than half the sum planned by the GLC. This has left room to increase investment in improving the system, up from £234 million spent last year to £261 million planned for this year, while still usefully reducing the burden on the ratepayer.

Council of Transport Ministers

16. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the European Council of Transport Ministers under the British presidency.

Mr. Moore: Useful progress has been made in preparation for Transport Council meetings on 10-11 November and 15-16 December. The informal Council last month showed that there is a willingness to make progress on the liberalisation of air transport, and we shall be pressing for agreement on a package of liberal measures for a three-year first step towards the 1992 target date for completion of the Community's internal market. On shipping we are building on the substantial measure of agreement already reached on three of the four proposed shipping regulations with the aim of adopting a comprehensive package in December. We shall also be pressing for progress on road haulage liberalisation on the basis of Commission proposals expected shortly.

Bus Services (Subsidy)

18. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of bus services are being financed through subsidy under the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: Operators registered about three quarters of existing service levels to run without subsidy after deregulation on 26 October, although there are variations from one part of the country to another. I am glad that local authorities have been able broadly to continue the rest of the services, at greatly reduced subsidy.

M25

19. **Mr. Fry** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to relieve congestion on the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Congestion has occurred mainly at peak times on the south-west section of M25. Following a study by Brian Colquhoun and Partners in the spring, we are already changing some of the road markings and signs to help traffic flow more smoothly at junctions. As I announced on 29 October, we have appointed L. G. Mouchel and Partners to develop a plan for carrying out the construction of a fourth lane between junctions 11 and 13, together with improvements to slip roads and strengthening of the hard shoulder. These were also recommended by Colquhouns.

BR (Service Improvement)

20. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail management concerning service improvement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I frequently discuss with Sir Robert Reid improvements to the service offered to BR's customers. The objectives that we have now set the board for the next three years emphasise the importance of improving its quality of service.

Docklands Light Railway

21. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to reach conclusions concerning the funding of the eastern extension of docklands light railway.

Mr. Moore: I have not yet received any formal proposals for an eastern extension of the docklands light railway.

Motorway Construction

22. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on new motorway construction in each of the past three years at constant prices.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The amount spent on new motorway construction in England at constant 1985-86 prices was £263 million in 1983-84, £281 million in 1984-85 and £254 million in 1985-86.

Channel Tunnel

23. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the Channel tunnel project.

Mr. David Mitchell: Over the last three months, my Department has received about 70 representations from members of the public about the Channel tunnel project.

British Rail (Subsidies)

25. **Mr. Forman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he is making with the reduction of public subsidies to British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced on 10 October that he had been able to settle this year's public service obligation grant to the railway at £712·3 million. This was comfortably within the cash ceiling on PSO grant for this year of £736 million, which represents the target which my predecessor set in 1983. I pay tribute to Sir Robert Reid, his board and the staff of the railway for the considerable achievement of reducing the railway's call on the taxpayer by over 25 per cent. in this period.

On 21 October, my right hon. Friend announced updated objectives for the railway including a new grant target. He confirmed that Inter-City, which is achieving a remarkable financial turnround in financial performance, will not be eligible for any PSO grant from 1 April 1988, and asked Sir Robert Reid to reduce the Network SouthEast and provincial sector's requirement for taxpayers' support to £555 million (in 1986-87 prices) by 1989-90, while securing improvements in the quality of service provided.

Bus Services

26. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he now expects to bus services following implementation of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is already clear that the overall level of bus services will be broadly maintained, at a lower cost to the rate and taxpayer. New forms of operation, including minibuses and taxibuses, are being introduced to meet the needs of travellers more closely.

Road Safety

27. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the relative performance of the United Kingdom in road safety compared with that of other European countries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My assessment is based on the rate of road deaths per 100,000 population. In the latest available statistics, the rate for the United Kingdom—10·2 in 1984—is the lowest of any member state of the European Community. Rates in Norway and Sweden are lower still at 9·8 and 9·6 respectively. With over 300,000 killed or injured on our roads, the figures are still too high. There remains considerable scope for further improvement, particularly to reduce casualties among vulnerable road users on urban and residential streets.

Rural Bus Services

28. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in the provision of rural bus services.

46. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of the Transport Act 1985 upon the extent and operation of rural bus services.

Mr. David Mitchell: It appears that rural bus services have been broadly maintained at their previous levels and that there have been substantial savings in local authority subsidy. The Government's transitional rural grant, worth up to £20 million for Great Britain in the present financial year, and the rural transport development fund, worth £1 million in England this year, with additional amounts available for Scotland and Wales, have contributed to this good result, and to a number of innovative rural services.

Railways (Investment)

29. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what trend there has been in the last four years in investment in the United Kingdom's railways.

Mr. David Mitchell: Railway investment in Great Britain has increased by 37 per cent. in real terms over the four years from 1982 to 1985-86. In 1985-86 prices the figures are:

	£ million
1982	278
1983	281
1984-85	[1]321
1985-86	382

[1] The accounting year 1984-85 covered a period of 15 months. The figure shown above represents four-fifths (equivalent to 12 months) of the actual total of £401 million recorded for 1984-85.

Search and Rescue (North-West Scotland)

31. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will report on progress towards establishing a search and rescue helicopter facility in north-west Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In April of this year my Department established a working group under the aegis of the United Kingdom search and rescue committee to

review rescue helicopter coverage of the United Kingdom search and rescue region, which includes north-west Scotland.

The group has considered written evidence and has held coastal meetings at Inverness and Lee-on-Solent to which interested parties were invited.

A report is presently being prepared to put before the United Kingdom search and rescue committee in December. I cannot anticipate its contents.

West Yorkshire (Buses)

33. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the bus services of West Yorkshire are being financed through subsidy under the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: The West Yorkshire passenger transport executive's latest transport plan estimates that some 30 per cent. of vehicle miles on local bus services will, under the Transport Act 1985, be financed through subsidy after deregulation on 26 October. I understand that overall service levels are estimated to be substantially the same after 26 October as before.

BR (Investments)

34. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number and value of major investments approved for British Rail since June 1983.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since June 1983, we have approved 19 major investments, with a total value of some £940 million at today's prices. In addition, we have given approval in principle to Channel tunnel investment, and the Railways Board has itself also approved many smaller schemes.

Bus Services (Union Representations)

35. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the trade unions covering passenger transport about the affects of the Transport Act 1985 on bus services.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a number of representations. Among the points I have made in reply has been that local bus services were in long-run decline before the implementation of the Transport Act 1985, and that in the past ten years employment in the bus and coach industry as a whole has fallen by some 22 per cent. In the National Bus Company alone, over 20,000 odd jobs have been lost in that period. The Transport Act gives the bus industry new opportunities to break out of its spiral of decline and there is every reason to believe that in most of the country it will succeed in doing so.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is now in a position to announce plans to light further stretches of the United Kingdom's motorways; and whether he has identified any particular stretches for early lighting up.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The current programme for additional motorway lighting in England is listed below:

Motorway	*Location*	*Length (miles)*	*Installation year*
M25	Junction 6	approx 1·5	1987-88
M25	Junction 11	approx 1·5	After 1986-87
M5	Catshill to Lydiate Ash	1·7	1986-87
M6	East of Preston	6·5	1987-88
M62	West of Eccles Interchange	0·3	1986-87
M66	Middleton to M62 Simister Interchange	1·0	After 1989

Other motorways are the responsibility of the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as appropriate.

Ilminister Bypass

38. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the date for the start of the Ilminister bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tenders for this scheme were invited in August, and due to be returned at the end of October. We will award the contract very shortly. We expect the successful contractor to start work as soon as possible.

Bypasses

39. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the progress of the programme of road bypasses around towns and villages.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Government's commitment to removing through traffic from towns and villages has resulted in the completion of 61 trunk road bypasses and relief roads since 1979. A further 157 such schemes are in the current programme.

The construction and improvement of local roads is the responsibility of the local highway authorities. The Government's policy is to permit local authorities the maximum freedom in planning their road programmes. Although the Government use transport supplementary grant to encourage local authorities to improve roads that complement the trunk road network, there is no single programme of bypasses on local roads. The information that we have is that local authorities will have completed about 130 bypasses and relief roads in the three years to March 1987, with a further 200 or so under construction or due to start during 1987-88.

Domestic Air Routes

40. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has about the effects on consumers on domestic air routes of liberalisation of the airline industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is clear evidence that the introduction of competition on domestic routes has benefited consumers through improved levels of service and a wider range of fares. Furthermore, traffic on the Edinburgh and Glasgow trunk routes from London, for example, has grown faster since the introduction of competing services at Heathrow than might have been expected by comparison with growth on other major domestic routes.

BR (Procurement Programme)

41. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss British Rail's procurement programme.

Mr. David Mitchell: The position has not changed since my reply to the hon. Member on 24 February 1986 at column *668*.

Disabled People

42. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail on travelling conditions on trains for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My officials have regular discussions with British Rail about the Transport needs of disabled people. We are also staging a major international conference on 1 and 2 December to review and discuss the transport needs of disabled people. European transport operators, including British Rail, will be taking part.

Bus Services (Lancashire)

43. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many bus services have been cut in Lancashire; and what is the increased cost arising from implementation of the Transport Act.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the overall level of bus services in Lancashire after 26 October has been maintained at current levels and that, far from increases, the costs of subsidy to the county council has been reduced from over £8 million to under £3 million in a full year.

National Bus Company (Privatisation)

44. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will report progress on the privatisation of the various subsidiaries of the National Bus Company.

Mr. David Mitchell: Four subsidiaries, National Holidays Ltd., Devon General Ltd., Badgerline Ltd. and the Southern Vectis Omnibus Company Ltd. have been sold, the last three to their own managements. I look forward to approving further disposals of NBC subsidiaries in the near future.

London Underground (Crime)

45. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussion he has had with London Regional Transport in respect of combating crime on the London underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: As the hon. Member will know, a study to investigate crime on the London underground, including officials from my Department and London Regional Transport, was launched at the Prime Minister's seminar on crime prevention in January of this year. Its report has now been completed and is to be published next month. As a result of this work we are making available to London Regional Transport £15 million over the next three years to invest in measures which the report identifies. LRT is now preparing a detailed programme of implementation which I shall be discussing with the chairman.

Landing Rights (Heathrow)

47. **Sir Peter Emery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will consider applications from airlines, not at the moment allowed to use London, Heathrow, to be allowed to have landing rights at London, Heathrow; what was the date when an airline was last granted this right; and if he will consider discussing this matter when he next speaks with the chairman of the British Airports Authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: While foreign airlines require an operating permit from my right hon. Friend to operate air transport services at British airports, services by British airlines are subject to licensing by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Rights to use Heathrow airport are also subject to air traffic distribution rules. Rules restricting access to Heathrow were first instituted in 1977 in order to prevent demand from swamping the capacity available at the airport. In June 1985 paragraphs 11.3 and 11.12 of the White Paper "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542) described the then rules and amended them slightly. The White Paper also announced the Government's intention to invite the Civil Aviation Authority to review the rules for traffic distribution between the London airports. The authority's review was completed in May 1986. It endorsed the existing rules and recommended further restrictions. On 21 July I announced the Government's intention to make formal traffic distribution rules under S31 of the Airports Act 1986. These rules were made on 24 September. Copies were placed in the Library. They include restrictions on new airlines operating international scheduled services, and on charter flights, at Heathrow and further regulate access for new domestic scheduled operations and other categories of service. My right hon. Friend has no present plans to change the recently made rules.

I and my right hon. Friend meet the chairman of BAA plc. from time to time to discuss a variety of matters of mutual interest, including airline operations at Heathrow.

M27 (Junction 5)

48. **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to improve the lighting at junction 5 of the M27 motorway in the borough of Eastleigh.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A lighting scheme has been designed. The Civil Aviation Authority and other interested bodies have been asked to comment on it. The work will be put in hand when agreement is reached.

Sightseeing Buses, London

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to take steps to reduce the number of sightseeing double-decker buses on the streets of London.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The licensing of London local services, including excursions and tours, is a matter for the Metropolitan traffic commissioner within the provisions of the Transport Act 1985.

Helicopters (Safety)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the results of the Civil Aviation Authority study into the safety aspects of helicopter offshore diversions.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Aviation safety is the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority, not of my right hon. Friend. I understand that in the study that the CAA has carried out, it analysed much complex statistical material bearing upon safety of offshore diversion by helicopters but found that the data so far pointed to no firm conclusions. The CAA now hopes to start a new round of discussions with interested parts of the industry in the very near future.

M1 (Repairs)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many carriageway repair operations are being carried out on the M1 motorway between London and Wakefield (i) southbound and (ii) northbound; if he will identify the location, the mileage involved, the start of the contracs and the estimated termination of the repair works involved.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

Site	*Carriageway*	*Mileage*	*Start date*	*Programmed completion date*
J1-5	Both carriageways	1·2	20 October 1986	14 November 1986
J8	Both carriageways	2·8	23 May 1986	3 November 1986
J14-15	southbound	1·5	19 August 1986	11 November 1986
J22-23	southbound	1·5	25 September 1986	30 November 1986
J24-25	southbound	0·3	24 September 1986	mid-November 1986
J31-33	northbound	5·3	mid-October 1986	end January 1987

In addition, minor repairs take place from time to time.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions, and for what periods and reasons junction 8 *(a)* north and *(b)* south on the M1 at Hemel Hempstead has been closed to traffic during the current year; and when it is anticipated that both junctions will be open for traffic.

Mr. Moore: During the last 12 months, the northbound entry and southbound exit slip roads at junction 8 have been closed on two occasions, for about three weeks from 10 June and again since 13 September. The closures have been to permit reconstruction of the adjacent sections of both main carriageways, as part of a major contract covering a three mile length of the motorway. This is a lane rental contract and the contractor hopes to complete the work by 5 November, when the two slip roads should be re-opened.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions and for what periods and reasons there have been contraflow and other restrictions in the vicinity of junction 8 *(a)* northbound and *(b)* southbound on the M1 at Hemel Hempstead; and when it is anticipated that present roadworks will be completed.

Mr. Moore: On three occasions in the last six years: from October 1980 to November 1983 for the widening of M1 between junctions 5 and 8; from 2 to 16 July 1985 for the reconstruction of 200 yd of the northbound carriageway north of the widened section; and since 23 May 1986 for the reconstruction of a further three miles of both carriageways. The contractor hopes to complete the current work by 5 November.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish a list of programmed or planned roadworks in the vicinity of junction 8 of the M1 at Hemel Hempstead in the next 12 months, giving details of work involved, its cost and duration.

Mr. Moore: There are plans to overlay parts of both carriageways between junctions 9 and 10 in the financial year 1987-88. The precise extent, timing and cost have not yet been determined.

M1 (Closed-circuit Television)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many closed circuit televisions are installed on the M1 between London and Wakefield; for what purpose they are used; when they were installed; and when they will be removed.

Mr. Moore: Eight temporary closed circuit television cameras are in use at the contraflow scheme between junctions 14 and 15 of the M1 for the purpose of aiding traffic management and the deployment of emergency services. They were installed at the start of the contraflow scheme on 1 October and will be removed when the maintenance contract is completed in mid-November.

Permanent CCTV cameras are being installed between junctions 5 and 8 of the M1 by the end of the year to assist the police survey and manage the traffic flow in the vicinity of the M1-M25 interchange. Some of the masts for these are already in place but no cameras have as yet been installed.

M3 (Bar End to Christchurch)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to complete his consideration of the inspector's report on the public inquiry into the completion of the M3 motorway from Bar End to Christchurch; and when he will make a consequential public announcement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Road Sweeping (Greenwich)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what financial provision is to be made available to the London borough of Greenwich for the sweeping of

the four main trunk roads in the borough; how this compares with the allocation made by the former Greater London council; and how frequently his Department now expects those roads to be swept compared with the past.

Mr. David Mitchell: Next year's allocations have not been made. Sweeping for highway safety and maintenance is governed by the Department's code of practice, while that for health and amenity purposes is a borough responsibility. Variations to the code have been drawn up to reflect the special problems of London roads. The detailed application within individual boroughs will continue to be discussed with them.

Drink-driving Campaign

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his drinking and driving campaign for Christmas and beyond.

Mr. David Mitchell: Drinking and driving is a year-round problem which we will continue to publicise at every opportunity. The theme for the Christmas phase of the rolling road safety publicity programme will be "Don't Drink and Drive". The advertising element will be launched at the end of November.

Eastern Counties (Road Routes)

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has completed his study of east-west road routes through the eastern counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The report of the county councils who undertook the study for the Department was received at the end of last week. It will take a while to assess its findings. The results will be made known as quickly as possible.

Transport Act 1985 (West Yorkshire)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current operation of the Transport Act 1985 in relation to west Yorkshire.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that bus services overall are at broadly the same level as before deregulation. Bus express services and minibuses are being introduced in a number of places, providing customers with better services.

Messrs. Arvoland, Cambridgeshire

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport what negotiations he has had with Messrs. Arvoland of Cambridgeshire, manufacturers of remould tyres, about the danger of manufacturing and selling such tyres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My officials have been in discussion with Arvoland Limited since receiving a report from Birmingham consumer protection officers last May. These discussions have included tests on remould tyres manufactured by Arvoland Limited to assess whether they are safe. The results show that tyres manufactured before April 1986 may not comply with the performance requirements of the Motor Vehicles Tyres (Safety) Regulations 1984.

The manufacturer has now agreed to withdraw from sales as quickly as possible tyres produced before this date. In addition, further action under the code of practice on tyre recalls agreed between the Department and relevant trade associations is being considered urgently.

Air Transport Industry

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the contribution of the United Kingdom's air transport industry to the national economy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Civil aviation directly provides about 80,000 jobs in the United Kingdom. In 1985, British airlines contributed some £650 million to the balance of payments. About £29 billion of our visible trade last year passed through United Kingdom airports.

Electric Milk Floats (Accidents)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were killed or injured over the last 12 months in accidents involving electric milk floats.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available. Although the police collect information about every road accident in which someone is injured, they do not record "electric milk floats" as a separate vehicle type. Milk floats are classed with "light goods vehicles". This situation is likely to remain for the time being, as a balance has to be struck between the additional police resources required and the usefulness, for road safety policy, of the additional data collected.

DEFENCE

Cruise and Pershing

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the impact of the removal of cruise and Pershing II missiles from western Europe on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's strategy of flexible response.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 29 October at column *199*.

Contracts (North-West)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the latest estimate of the number of people employed on defence contracts in the north-west during 1986.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Estimates of the total number of jobs in United Kingdom industry sustained by defence expenditure are derived from generalised statistical information. It is not possible to give a separate figure for the north-west of England.

Nuclear Weapons (Tests)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1 January he has met experts on the verification of nuclear weapon tests from *(a)* United Kingdom non-governmental centres of excellence, *(b)* the administration of the United States of America and *(c)* the administration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: United Kingdom officials have met British non-governmental seismology experts on a number of occasions this year. Officials have also met foreign experts, including United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics representatives, at the two meetings of the ad hoc group of scientific experts of the conference on disarmament.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to study all the scientific evidence submitted to his Department from non-governmental sources on the subject of verifying a comprehensive nuclear test ban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on 30 June 1986 at column *438*.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make it his policy to invite the Natural Resource Defence Council of the United States of America to submit a full report to Her Majesty's Government on the scientific purpose, the technology employed, and the technical results of its nuclear weapon explosion verification experiments completed recently at Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to invite Dr. Thomas Cochrane, senior scientist of the Natural Resource Defence Council of the United States of America to meet nuclear weapon test seismic verification experts in his Department;

(3) if he has any plans to invite Professor Mikhail Sodovsky, Director of the Soviet Institute of Geophysics, to engage in discussions with his Department on the subject of the technical problems associated with verifying nuclear weapon tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on 30 June 1986 at column *438*. The results of the study of the Semiplatinsk nuclear weapon test site by the Natural Resource Defence Council of the United States of America will, no doubt, be published.

The conference on disarmament in Geneva and its adhoc group of scientific experts are the appropriate fora to disccuss the issues surrounding the verification of nuclear weapons tests with the Soviet Union. We are aware of the work of Dr. Thomas Cochrane and Professor Mikhail Sodovsky through open literature.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government will make available additional financial support to non-governmental scientific bodies investigating or wishing to investigate the technical difficulties associated with verifying nuclear weapon tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Her Majesty's Government are content with the present level of funding into the technical investigation of the difficulties associated with the verification of nuclear weapon tests, and in the present circumstances see no need to increase it.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the administration of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics about the three seismic array experiments conducted at Semipalatinsk in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics by the National Resource Defence Council of the United States of America.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Nuclear testing issues are discussed as a matter of course at regular meetings with the United States Administration. We also discuss such issues with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's proposal for the installation of seismic arrays around the shared United States/United Kingdom nuclear weapon test site at Nevada; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Her Majesty's Government are not aware of any official proposal by the USSR to install seismic arrays around the United State's nuclear weapon test site in Nevada; the question is therefore hypothetical.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer on 13 May, *Official Report*, column *542*, what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the degree of effectiveness required of verification systems in any future comprehensive nuclear weapons test ban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on 2 July 1986 at column *585*.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence which particular capability of the United Kingdom's seismometers designed to verify nuclear weapons tests specifically requires improvement to achieve the requisite level of efficiency in the signal to noise ratio for effective verification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no deficiencies specific to United Kingdom seismometers and, although improvements in the signal-to-noise ratio are always beneficial, the pivotal argument in verification is not detection but an unambiguous method of discriminating between nuclear explosions and all other seismic events.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest plans to accelerate Her Majesty's Government's programme for solving the technical seismic difficulties associated with the verification of a comprehensive nuclear weapons test ban.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Research continues to improve diagnostic and experimental techniques to identify the nature of seismic disturbances. Her Majesty's Government wholeheartedly support the activities of the conference on disarmament, and the bodies it sponsors such as the ad-hoc group of scientific experts, which is the appropriate multilateral forum in which to discuss the verification issues related to nuclear testing.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1970 Her Majesty's Government have been invited to observe nuclear weapon tests conducted in the United States of America.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: United Kingdom observers have been present at the Nevada test site when nuclear tests relevant to the United Kingdom defence nuclear programme have been undertaken. In co-operation with the United States the United Kingdom has conducted 15 underground tests at the NTS from 1970 to date.

Nuclear Weapons (Design and Development)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the technology and expertise necessary for the satisfactory design and development of new nuclear warheads solely by the processes of computer simulation is available to Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Computer simulation alone does not currently offer a method of satisfactorily designing and developing new nuclear warheads.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the statement of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) on 23 October, *Official Report*, column 1294, what discussions are to be held with the United Kingdom's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies on the development of adequate procedures to verify possible reductions by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of the number of SS20s based in Europe.

Mr. Stanley: The United States continues to develop its negotiating position on intermediate range nuclear forces with its allies, principally through regular meetings in NATO of the special consultative group. The group has considered all issues relevant to an arms control agreement on intermediate range nuclear forces, including verification. It last met on 16 October.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed the issue of collateral constraints on short and medium range nuclear systems with official representatives of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Stanley: The question of collateral constraints on shorter-range systems has always been an element in the INF negotiations which are conducted between the United States, in consultation with her NATO allies, and the Soviet Union. The issue was also raised in a meeting between my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Soviet ambassador on 23 July.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the effect on the security of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of an arms control agreement on medium range nuclear missiles in Europe without reference to collateral restraints on short range nuclear missiles.

Mr. Stanley: NATO has always insisted that any agreement limiting long range intermediate nuclear force missiles should include appropriate constraints on Soviet shorter range nuclear force missiles to prevent circumvention of the provisions on longer range weapons. This remains the position.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the effects on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's strategy of flexible response of the removal of ground-launched cruise missiles from *(a)* the United Kingdom or *(b)* Western Europe.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 29 October 1986 at column *199*.

Holy Loch

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government are currently investigating the possibility of adapting the docking facilities at Holy Lock, Scotland.

Mr. Stanley: No. The US Defence Secretary has made it clear that the US Navy has no plans to withdraw from the Holy Loch.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hospitals (Alternative Services)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evaluation studies have been carried out of the effects of hospital rundown and build-up of alternative services on patients and staff.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him by my predecessor on 9 July at column *168*. More recently, we know of Mersey regional health authority's desire to study the rundown process at Rainhill hospital, and have seen a proposal to study the rundown and closure of Saxondale hospital in Nottingham. A study is already under way of the effects of transfers of patients made in connection with the closure of Banstead hospital. We understand that Birmingham city council will be launching a major research project in January 1987 to consider the movement of mentally ill, mentally handicapped and physically handicapped people into community care.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the results of the investigation into the provision of clearer and firmer control guidance on planning and monitoring local mental health services will be published.

Mrs. Currie: As noted in the Government Response* to the report of the Social Services Committee on community care (second report, 1984-85 Session), the Department is exploring the need for such guidance, including revision of the policy papers which were appended to the Government response. Any fresh guidance will be published in the normal way. Reports of the visits of the national development team for mentally handicapped people and of the health advisory service to individual areas are published, as are periodic general reports by both bodies.

* Government response to the report of the Social Services Committee on community care (second report, 1984-85

Local Office Staffs

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of staff employed in his Department's local offices in July 1979 and July 1986 in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow, Central.

Mr. Lyell: The city of Glasgow is currently served by 15 of the Department's local offices whose total

administrative area is not conterminous with the city boundaries. The constituency of Glasgow, Central is currently served by nine of the Department's local offices whose total administrative area is not conterminous with the constituency boundaries.

The number of staff in post on 1 July for the requested years is as follows:—

	1979	*1986*
Glasgow	1,900	1,954
Glasgow Central	1,151	1,177

Benefit Claims

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of benefit claims in action, live load, in August 1979 and August 1986 in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow, Central.

Mr. Lyell: Glasgow is covered by 14 of the Department's local offices. Glasgow (Central) is covered by eight of those offices but the boundaries are not conterminous with those of the constituency. The table shows the number of supplementary benefit claims in action—live load—in August 1979 and August 1986 in the offices serving *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow Central.

	August 1979	*August 1986*
Glasgow	88,560	151,373
Glasgow Central	54,839	97,127

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of benefit claims awaiting processing, backlog in August 1979 and August 1986 in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow Central.

Mr. Lyell: Figures for the number of claims awaiting action in local offices are not available for the period before 1983. The numbers of claims for supplementary benefit awaiting action on 30 August 1983 and 26 August 1986 were as follows:

	30 August 1983	*26 August 1986*
Glasgow	1,879	4,069
Glasgow, (Central)	1,124	2,121

Single Payments

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount of moneys paid out in single payments in 1979 and 1985 by his Department's offices in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow Central.

Mr. Lyell: Glasgow is covered by 14 of the Department's local offices. Glasgow Central is covered by eight of those offices but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of the constituency. The information requested is shown for years ending early in April. However, the figures are not directly comparable; single payments replaced exceptional needs payments in November 1980.

	1979-80 £	**1985-86* £
Glasgow	3,415,812	20,543,269
Glasgow Central*	2,048,660	14,936,051

* 1985-86 figures are provisional

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow Central are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit; and how many are pensioners, heads of one-parent families or unemployed.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from the Department's offices serving *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Glasgow, Central on 13 August 1986 — the latest available figures — were as follows:

	Glasgow	*Glasgow Central*
Unemployed	67,568	43,161
Over pension age	38,735	26,271
Others (including one parent families)	45,070	27,695
Total	151,373	97,127

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

AIDS

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the current number of acquired immune deficiency syndrome sufferers in the United Kingdom; and at what rate this is increasing;

(2) what is the estimated total annual cost to public funds of treating acquired immune deficiency syndrome sufferers in the United Kingdom; and what is the total amount being spent on research into the disease.

Mr. Newton: At the end of September 1986, 512 cases of AIDS in the United Kingdom had been reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre of whom 250 had died. The number of cases has been doubling approximately every 10 months. The Government-funded Medical Research Council is responsible for co-ordinating AIDS research in the United Kingdom. I understand that 15 special project grants have been awarded at a cost of £1·5 million.

I regret that information on the total annual cost to public funds of treating AIDS patients is not available. However, there is some information available on the cost of treating individual AIDS patients and I refer my hon. Friend to my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 17 July at column *612*.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any persons have contracted acquired immune deficiency syndrome as the result of treating an acquired immune deficiency syndrome patient.

Mr. Newton: No health care worker is known to have contracted AIDS in the United Kingdom as a result of treating an AIDS patient. One nurse has developed antibodies to the AIDS virus following an accident with a contaminated needle.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is aware of any babies born in the United Kingdom who are (i) acquired immune deficiency syndrome carriers and (ii) suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: By the end of September, two cases of babies with AIDS in the United Kingdom had been reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre. There have also been reports of babies who may be infected with the AIDS virus. These cases are unconfirmed and are being investigated.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any persons have received transfused blood contaminated with the acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus.

Mr. Newton: Since October 1985 the national blood transfusion service has screened all blood donations for antibodies to the AIDS virus. No cases of AIDS virus transmission have been reported in patients given blood since that date. Before screening could be made available to the service, a small number of patients received blood infected with the virus. Two of these have since developed AIDS.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the number of people being treated for acquired immune deficiency syndrome per 100,000 of the population in each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country for the past five years.

Mr. Newton: Information in the form requested is not available but the following figures show cumulative totals of cases reported to the World Health Organisation, together with an approximate rate per 100,000 population.

Country	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986 to June*	*Approx Rate/ 100,000 of cumulative totals*
Austria	—	—	13	28	36	0·480
Belgium	—	38	65	139	171	1·730
Canada	31	84	222	522	699	2·800
Denmark	7	19	37	68	93	1·820
Federal Republic of Germany	11	48	203	377	538	0·880
France	—	79	224	573	859	1·560
Greece	—	1	6	13	22	0·220
Iceland	—	—	—	—	2	1·000
Ireland	—	—	—	8	10	0·280
Italy	1	6	39	140	300	0·520
Japan	—	—	—	11	15	0·010
Luxembourg	—	—	—	3	3	0·750
Netherlands	3	18	48	98	146	1·010
Norway	—	—	5	17	24	0·570
Portugal	—	1	2	18	28	0·270
Spain	3	13	37	83	177	0·460
Sweden	—	4	16	42	57	0·690
Switzerland	9	20	44	100	138	2·120
Turkey	—	—	—	2	2	0·004
United Kingdom	3	28	77	287	389	0·690
United States of America	1,329	4,091	9,605	18,947	24,491	10·500

Pensioners

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of people in receipt of a pension in respect of age in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986.

Mr. Lyell: The only state pension payable solely in respect of age is the non-contributory retirement pension for people aged over 80. Entitlement to state retirement pension is subject to contribution and retirement conditions in addition to the attainment of minimum pension age. Supplementary pension is payable from minimum pension age, provided the individual concerned is not in full-time work and income is below statutory requirements. The numbers of people in receipt of retirement and supplementary pensions on the dates for which information is available and which are the most relevant for the years specified are as follows:

Retirement Pension[1]
November 1978: 8,775,480
March 1986[2]: 9,777,880

Supplementary Pension only
December 1978: 107,000
December 1985[2]: 100,000

[1] Includes non-contributory pensions for people over 80, pensions paid to people overseas and those who receive graduated pension only.
[2] Latest dates for which information is available.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 19 November 1985, to the hon. Member for Corby, (Mr. Powell), *Official Report*, column 162, how many responses he has received from hon. and right hon. Members to his invitation to recommend individuals for membership of regional health authorities.

Mrs. Currie: Five.

Hip Operations

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department is taking to reduce waiting list times for hip operations.

Mr. Newton: The chairmen of regional health authorities were asked to report by the end of October on

the nature, extent and cause of delays in in-patient and out-patient treatment in every district. These reports will be studied urgently with a view to undertaking a sustained programme of action to reduce waiting lists and times. Health authorities have also been asked to increase the number of hip operations from 38,000 in 1984 to approaching 50,000 in 1990.

NHS (Private Contractors)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private contractors have had to withdraw from catering, cleaning and laundry commitments in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: To date the Department has been notified of 12 contracts awarded to private contractors which have been terminated, or are due to be terminated, before the end of the contract period.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private companies engaged in National Health Service contracts have had penalties imposed upon them for failing to meet their contracts.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not collected centrally.

Local Office (Camberwell)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what increase in staff resources he will allocate to the supplementary benefit office at 6 Camberwell New Road, SE5; and when the office will re-open.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on 7 March at column *322*, in which he announced that over 5,000 staff have been allocated to local offices this year in addition to the number justified by normal staffing arrangements. The supplementary benefit office at 6 Camberwell New Road received an additional 10 staff as its share of the 5,000 staff. A full review of local office complements is in progress, the results of which will be taken into account in determining staff resources for all local offices after April 1987. Until then, there are no proposals to provide a further increase in staffing levels at this office.

Plans are being prepared to repair serious damage to the counter area, caused by members of the public. The office will open again when the repairs are completed and the facilities are safe for both staff and public.

Surgery Waiting Times (Thames Regions)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average delay for elective non-urgent surgery in each of the Thames health regions.

Mr. Newton: I regret that I cannot give my hon. Friend information in precisely the form he seeks. The estimated median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission for surgical operation is given in the table for the latest year for which information is available centrally.

National Health Service hospitals, non-psychiatric and non-maternity departments, 1984

Regional Health Authority	*Estimated median waiting time (in weeks) of surgical waiting list cases*
North West Thames	6
North East Thames	7
South East Thames	6
South West Thames	8

Under 25-Year-Olds

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to the Government of keeping a single under 25-year-old on social security for one calendar year.

Mr. Lyell: If a single under 25-year-old is unemployed the benefit expenditure for a year at current rates is as follows. If he is entitled to unemployment benefit, he receives £1,601·60 a year. If not, he may receive supplementary benefit either as a householder, at a cost of £1,549·60 or as a non-householder at a cost of £1,240·20 per year, though the supplementary benefit costs would be lower if the claimant had other resources. Householders will normally also be entitled to housing benefit at a rate dependent upon their individual circumstances.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average number of applications for invlaid care allowance *(a)* received by and *(b)* completed by his Department in each month, using the last year for which figures are available as a base.

Mr. Major: The table sets out the actual number of invlaid care allowance claims recieved from men and single women and, separately, from married women and the number of cases cleared in each month from October 1985 to September 1986. Because of the increase in claims from June 1986, a monthly average has not been calculated.

Month	*Men and single women*		*Married women*	
	Claims received	*Claims cleared*	*Claims received*	*Claims cleared*[1]
1985				
October	744	749	1,261	—
November	654	551	1,783	—
December	543	446	913	—
1986				
January	774	646	1,367	—
February	855	636	1,272	—
March	755	637	1,132	—

Month	Men and single women		Married women	
	Claims received	Claims cleared	Claims received	Claims cleared[1]
April	868	909	1,013	—
May	595	775	1,539	—
June	738	884	2,900	—
July	1,735	698	7,925	[2]1,386
August	1,561	1,092	7,904	347
September	6,230	2,029	33,676	3,604

[1] The legislation extending ICA to married women received Royal Assent at end of July 1986. No awards could be adjudicated prior to Royal Assent.
[2] Includes cases disallowed in earlier months because conditions other than marital status were not satisfied.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown of the number of applications for invalid care allowance currently outstanding, showing the totals by numbers of months outstanding and giving an overall summary total.

Mr. Major: At 24 October 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 66,500 claims from married women and 9,000 from men and single women outstanding. I regret that information is not collected in a form to provide the breakdown requested.

Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the level of the over 80s addition to the retirement pension and supplementary pension at April 1987 had it been increased in line with changes to the retail price index since 1971.

Mr. Lyell: The 25 percentage addition introduced in September 1971 would rise to £1.20 in April 1987 if it were increased at the next uprating in line with increases in prices up to September 1986.

Earnings Limit

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the level of the limit on earnings for retirement pensioners at April 1987 had it been increased in line with changes to the retail price index between May 1985 and September 1986.

Mr. Lyell: If the retirement pensioners' earnings limit were increased in April 1987 in line with the movement of the retail price index between May 1985 and September 1986, it would increase from £75 to £77 (rounded to the nearest whole pound).

Family Income Supplement

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the most recent estimate of the proportion of recipients of family income supplement who are liable to income tax.

Mr. Major: At April 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the proportion of family income supplement recipients whose declared income, at the time their claim was made, exceeded the level of income above which income tax is payable was 70 per cent.

Benefit Claimants

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish information showing the number of claimants who have had their benefit *(a)* reduced or *(b)* withdrawn in connection with the restart scheme, the average duration of benefit withdrawal or reduction and the average loss and the numbers resulting from (i) failure to attend an interview, (ii) lack of interest in restart options and (iii) other reasons.

Mr. Major: Up to 9 October 1986, the latest date for which figures are available for the national restart scheme and by which time 522,668 people had been invited to interview, 10,842 decisions to disallow benefit or credits had been made. Of these, 9,757 were as a result of a failure to attend an interview without good cause 1,029 were on the grounds of non-availability for work and 56 resulted from a refusal of suitable employment. No information is available on the duration of benefit withdrawal or the average loss of benefit but where disallowance is the result of failure to attend for interview benefit is reinstated as soon as the person does attend or makes acceptable arrangements to be interviewed.

Only the disqualifications resulting from a refusal of suitable employment would lead to a reduction in benefit by the imposition of a voluntary unemployment deduction, under regulation 8 of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirement) Regulations 1983. No information on this small number of cases is available. In the other circumstances benefit is withdrawn, though some claimants may then become entitled to payments under the Supplementary Benefit (Urgent Cases) Regulations. No information is available about payments made in these cases under these urgency provisions.

Leaflets

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many copies of *(a)* P11 "NHS Prescriptions", *(b)* D11 "NHS Dental Treatment", *(c)* G11 "NHS vouchers for glasses (NHS glasses up to 1985)", *(d)* MV11 "Milk and Vitamins (for pregnant women)", and *(e)* H11"Help with Fares to Hospital", were produced for distribution in (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) Scotland, for each of the financial years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell: The number of leaflets produced and distributed in each of the financial years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 is shown in the table.

Year	Total number printed	England	Scotland	Wales (Welsh Office)
(a) P11 National Health Service prescriptions				
		[1]	[2]	
1982-83	5,270,000	3,547,555	300,000	25,000
1983-84	5,500,000	1,866,460	100,000	28,000
1984-85	6,500,000	2,336,720	100,000	28,000
1985-86	7,700,000	3,765,084	100,000	28,000
1986-87	8,000,000	1,852,300	100,000	40,000
Total	32,970,000	13,368,119	700,000	149,000
(b) D11 National Health Service dental treatment				
		[1]	[3]	
1982-83	3,500,000	522,664	21,700	17,000
1983-84	4,000,000	517,430	21,700	17,000
1984-85	4,000,000	517,370	21,700	17,000
1985-86	3,000,000	521,434	21,700	17,000
1986-87	2,500,000	518,485	21,700	40,000
Total	17,000,000	2,705,282	108,500	108,000
(c) G11 National Health Service vouchers for glasses (NHS glasses up to 1985)				
		[1]	[2]	
1982-83	3,500,000	676,682	57,000	26,000
1983-84	3,344,000	884,223	150,000	26,000
1984-85	3,300,000	644,073	150,000	26,000
1985-86	3,175,000	1,657,487	175,000	28,000
1986-87	3,000,000	659,644	150,000	30,000
Total	16,319,000	4,522,109	682,000	136,000
(d) MV11 milk and vitamins (for pregnant women)				
		[1]	[2]	
1982-83	4,300,000	1,273,815	100,000	10,000
1983-84	4,550,000	839,560	100,000	10,000
1984-85	1,850,000	721,023	100,000	10,000
1985-86	1,850,000	723,562	100,000	19,000
1986-87	1,950,000	737,414	100	10,000
Total	14,500,000	4,295,374	400,100	50,000
(e) H11 help with fares to hospital				
		[1]	[2]	
1982-83	1,370,000	821,000	20,000	2,000
1983-84	1,500,000	412,163	10,000	2,000
1984-85	1,500,000	415,233	20,000	2,000
1985-86	1,500,000	415,232	10,000	2,000
1986-87	1,662,000	419,584	15,500	2,000
Total	6,032,000	2,485,330	75,500	10,000

Footnotes to table:

[1] For initial distribution to all DHSS Local Offices.

[2] For initial distribution by Scottish Home and Health Department to Health Boards etc.

[3] For initial distribution by DHSS Central Office Scotland to local offices and Health Boards.

Note:

Leaflets are also delivered to:

Citizens Advice Bureaux.
DHAs
FPCs
DHSS Leaflets Unit, Canons Park, Stanmore, Middlesex.
The balance of stock is held by HMSO.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services *(a)* how many copies of the leaflet "The Health Service Today" were printed, *(b)* what was the cost, *(c)* whom they were distributed to, and *(d)* what was the cost of distribution to each of the categories mentioned in answer to *(c)*.

Mrs. Currie: Six hundred thousand copies of the leaflet "The Health Service Today" were printed at a cost of £10,900. Copies were sent to all Members of Parliament representing English constituencies, and to the press. The main distribution is through regional health authorities and family practitioner committees. The cost of distribution was £17,084.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, why leaflets D11 (NHS dental treatment), G11, (NHS vouchers for glasses), MV11 (milk and vitamins for pregnant women) and H11 (Help with fares to hospital) were withdrawn from the Post Office in July.

Mr. Lyell: Leaflet H11 has never been distributed through post offices. Leaflets D11, G11 and MV11 have not been displayed in post offices since July 1985.

Information about all the benefits referred to in the question is included in a single leaflet FB2 "Which benefit?", a brief guide to all social security benefits, which has recently been added to the displays of DHSS leaflets and posters in post offices.

The leaflets referred to in the question are distributed widely through local social security offices, DHSS leaflets unit and through many advice centres and libraries. In addition, leaflet D11 (NHS dental treatment) is distributed through dentists' surgeries, leaflet G11 (NHS vouchers for glasses) is distributed through opticians, leaflet MV11 (milk and vitamins) is distributed through clinics and H11 (fares to hospitals) is distributed through hospitals. It is both more helpful and more cost-effective to distribute these leaflets in this way than to do so through post offices.

Milk Tokens

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will extend the use of milk tokens to the purchase of soya milk; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Where a clinical need exists, certain approved soya-based milks are available free on prescription to mothers and children who qualify for this benefit. Generally, however, I am advised that cows' milk is nutritionally better than soya milk as a source of energy, protein, calcium and other minerals, and certain vitamins essential for the growth of a healthy child. No change in the present welfare milk arrangements is therefore envisaged.

In-patients (Cross-infections)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the public health laboratory service estimate of the rate of cross-infections amongst in-patients in each year from 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Information on cross-infections is not available on an annual basis. The 1981 public health laboratory service prevalence study of hospital acquired infection indicated that some 19·1 per cent. of patients surveyed in hospital had infections. About half these infections had been acquired before entry to hospital. There is no reason to suppose there has been a major change since 1981.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the table showing total growth on the National Health Service expenditure given in his answer of 14 May 1985, *Official Report*, columns 119-20, so as to provide information for 1985-86.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit claimants were registered at the Woolwich office of his Department at the most recent convenient date compared to the numbers at a similar point in each of the preceding eight years.

Mr. Lyell: The total number of people receiving supplementary benefit from the Department's local office at Woolwich on 13 August—the latest figures available—and on comparable dates in each of the preceding eight years was:

	Number
1986	18,982
1985	18,380
1984	17,516
1983	16,212
1982	14,895
1981	12,585
1980	11,016
1979	10,600
1978	11,101

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit payments were made by the Woolwich office of his Department to travellers or others with no fixed address during 1985; what was the total sum involved; and how these figures compare to those for the preceding seven years.

Mr. Lyell: The Department's local offices do not keep separate statistics on the number of supplementary benefit payments made to travellers or others with no fixed address.

The information is therefore not readily available and could be obtained only by a special exercise which would be disproportionately costly.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total sum paid out in single payments by his Department's Woolwich office in 1979 and 1985; and what was the total number of claimants in each case.

Mr. Lyell: During the year ending on 8 April 1986, the Department's Woolwich office made 16,827 single payments amounting to £1,462,009. These figures are provisional and some claimants may have received more than one payment. Comparable information for 1979 is not available.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants at his Department's Woolwich office are currently awaiting an appeal to a supplementary benefits tribunal compared to the figures of *(a)* two and *(b)* five years previously.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) on 23 October at column *981*.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current waiting time for a supplementary benefit tribunal hearing in the Greater London area compared with that of *(a)* two and *(b)* five years previously.

Mr. Lyell: National administrative statistics of social security appeals are not disaggregated for localities smaller than a social security region. The social security regions which include London were restructured in July 1982 when the three former regions were reduced to two and again less radically in April 1983. The boundaries of these regions are shown in appendix 4 of "Social Security Statistics 1983". As a consequence, the estimates for 1981 below are not comparable with those for 1984 and 1985.

Subject to these caveats, the average number of weeks from lodgement of an appeal to a hearing for all supplementary benefit appeals in the London regions was as follows:

Social Security Region	*Quarter Ending December 1981 Number of weeks*	*Quarter ending December 1984 Number of weeks*	*Quarter ending December 1985 Number of weeks*
London North	6·1	14·0	15·2
London South	7·3	14·0	18·9
London West	6·8		

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many severe weather payments have been made during 1986 to applicants at his Department's Woolwich office; and what was the total sum paid.

Mr. Lyell: Local offices have been asked to make a return so that the number of payments and amounts paid can be calculated. Not all these returns have yet been received, but it is known that the Woolwich office made 279 payments, totalling £10,081.

Pharmacists

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received from the pharmaceutical profession concerning their legal protection in the dispensing of forged prescriptions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have had one representation from the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and one letter from an individual.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures were taken by his Department to advise retail outlets other than pharmacies regarding the withdrawal of junior aspirin.

Mrs. Currie: The Department discussed with the pharmaceutical industry a number of measures to give publicity to the recommendation of the Committee on Safety of Medicines on 9 June 1986, that aspirin should not be given to children under 12 except on medical advice. Manufacturers immediately voluntarily stopped the supply of all aspirin-containing products for children and arranged to inform retail outlets of their action. I am advised that the manufacturers subsequently placed advertisements in trade journals and in ethnic minority newspapers, in addition to the extensive general publicity; some manufacturers wrote individually to retail outlets.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the new arrangements for National Health Service contracts for pharmacists to come into effect.

Mr. Newton: The introduction of the new arrangements for National Health Service pharmacy contracts is dependent on the enactment of the National Health Service (Amendment) Bill. No decision has yet been taken on an implementation date for the new contract.

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total cost of the rehabilitation works to the cardiac wing at Great Ormond street hospital for sick children, including fees and equipment.

Mrs. Currie: The total cost of the rehabilitation works to the cardiac wing at Great Ormond street hospital for sick children, including fees and equipment, is estimated to be £18,520,000. This sum does not include fees of council, solicitors and expert witnesses in connection with current litigation.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the cause of the delay in the estimated completion date of the rehabiliation works at Great Ormond street hospital.

Mrs. Currie: Delay to the estimated completion date of the rehabilitation work to the cardiac wing at Great Ormond street hospital has arisen from the unforeseeable degree of difficulty in carrying out a range of complex repair works. We anticipate completion by 28 February 1987.

Benefits

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to review existing procedures whereby interim financial assistance is not available to claimants in financial difficulties caused by administrative delay in processing benefits due to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The interim payment provisions have been reviewed and the scope for such payments is being extended under section 51(1) of the Social Security Act 1986.

Doctors

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to encourage more younger doctors to seek appointments in National Health Service hospitals prior to entering general practice; and if, in addition to the experience they will gain in hospital service, he will introduce further incentives with a view to ensuring the availability of adequate medical staff.

Mr. Newton: The recent consultation document on hospital medical staffing, "Achieving a Balance", a copy of which is in the Library, contains a package of measures which, along with continuing improvement in standards of patient care, is intended to improve medical career prospects. Doctors wishing to become principals in general practice are required to complete three years of specified vocational training of which two are spent in hospital training posts. An independent review body determines the remuneration levels for all National Health Service doctors.

Abortions and Sterilisations

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the average percentage of the workload of gynaecological departments which is spent in National Health Service hospitals upon non-emergency gynaecological out-patient attendances for *(a)* the performing of abortions and *(b)* the performing of sterilisations; and what percentage of such non-emergency gynaecological out-patient work is spent dealing with the sequelae of such procedures.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the total amount spent each year by the National Health Service upon the performing of abortions and sterilisations; and what element of this figure is made up of any special fees paid to doctors for such operations.

Mrs. Currie: The accounts submitted by the health authorities to the Department do not show separately the amounts spent on abortions and sterilisations and I regret therefore that we are unable to provide the information requested.

Family Practitioners (Rewards)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has plans to institute a system for rewarding the good family practitioner and penalising the bad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Government's "Primary Health Care — An Agenda for Discussion" contains proposals designed to reward those doctors providing the highest standards of care and to provide incentives to others. These and other proposals in the discussion document are currently the subject of wide consultation throughout the country with both professional and lay groups. When these consultations are completed at the end of this year and the evidence has been fully considered, we intend to formulate firm proposals.

Cervical Smears

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what target date he expects that the National Health Service should be able to provide a three-yearly cervical smear test cycle along the lines recommended by the British Medical Association.

Mrs. Currie: The recommended interval for cervical cancer screening is currently five years. This recommendation is under review and we will announce the outcome of that review in due course.

Social Security Act 1986

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, following the passing of the Social Security Act 1986, how many people have so far been affected or excluded from benefit as a result of *(a)* the ending of industrial disablement benefit for disablement below 14 per cent., *(b)* paying industrial disablement benefit of between 14 per cent. and 19 per cent. at the 20 per cent. rate, *(c)* the abolition of reduced rate unemployment and sickness benefit and maternity allowance for new claimants, *(d)* the extension of voluntary unemployment disqualification from six weeks to 13 weeks and *(e)* ending dependency additions in respect of dependants who are on strike.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available. The effects of the changes to the industrial injuries scheme and the extension of voluntary unemployment disqualification will be monitored, but no figures are yet available.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received the statistics about private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under the Nursing Home Act 1975 as at 31 December 1985 from regional and district health authorities; and whether he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Newton: Yes. I will arrange for a set of national, regional and district summaries to be placed in the Library as soon as validation of the data has been completed.

Training Programmes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if attendance on or completion of a course relating to the Government's restart programme or the proposed six-month training programme for the long-term unemployed under 25 years will affect entitlement to supplementary benefit, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October, c. *984*]: Attendance on or completion of a restart course does not affect entitlement to supplementary benefit. The new six-month training course will be experimental and will be run on a pilot basis in nine areas. As participation during these pilots will be voluntary, benefit sanctions will not apply to persons who do not accept offers or who leave courses prematurely.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information on bed numbers given in his answer of 1 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 49, so as to give data for 1985 and 1986 to date.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *100*]: The figures for closure of beds and for the provision of beds in new units for 1985 and 1986 are as follows. We do not hold figures centrally for the provision of new beds and services in non-National Health Service facilities or the numerous very small schemes which are responding to the "care in the community" initiative.

a. Hospitals approved for complete closure—number of beds involved

Regional Health Authority	*1985*	*1986 (to end of September)*
Northern	66	272
Yorkshire	604	369
Trent	173	132
East Anglian	100	—
North West Thames	176	601
North East Thames	64	—
South East Thames	128	74
South West Thames	97	237

Regional Health Authority	1985	1986 (to end of Sepiember)
Wessex	59	133
Oxford	185	—
South Western	333	—
West Midlands	268	—
Mersey	34	—
North Western	147	112
Special Health Authorities	—	—

Notes:
1. Temporary closures are not included.
2. Dates on which closures are implemented are not recorded centrally.

b. Partial hospital closures—number of beds approved for closure

Regional Health Authority	1985	1986 (to end of September)
Northern	10	19
Yorkshire	7	—
Trent	—	35
East Anglian	114	—
North West Thames	188	—
North East Thames	21	—
South East Thames	—	—
South West Thames	49	54
Wessex	—	—
Oxford	24	—
South Western	21	—
West Midlands	47	—
Mersey	32	—
North Western	—	—
Special Health Authorities	—	—

Notes:
1. Temporary closures are not included.
2. Dates on which closures are implemented are not recorded centrally.

c. Number of beds provided in new capital schemes

Regional Health Authority	1985	1986 (to end of July)
Northern	200	—
Yorkshire	—	165
Trent	478	146
East Anglian	168	—
North West Thames	—	40
North East Thames	167	428
South East Thames	208	—
South West Thames	32	—
Wessex	—	—
Oxford	43	70
South Western	78	—
West Midlands	276	413
Mersey	—	—
North Western	468	—
Special Health Authorities	30	—

Notes:
1. New schemes are those with a works cost in excess of £1 million.
2. Information on beds provided in minor schemes is not available centrally.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 4 November 1986

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tropical Development Research Institute

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of any changes made in plans for the concentration of units of the Tropical Development Research Institute at Chatham since he made the initial announcement.

Mr. Chris Patten: There have been no changes to the plan announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), the then Minister for Overseas Development, on 5 September 1985 for the relocation of the Tropical Development and Research Institute and the Land Resources Development Centre to a single site at the Chatham maritime development area. Detailed planning is continuing and the move is expected to be completed during 1988.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teacher Numbers

44. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to increase the numbers of teachers of physics, chemistry, mathematics and other sciences.

Mrs. Rumbold: The consultative document "Action on Teacher Supply in Mathematics, Physics and Technology" set out our proposals for those secondary subjects experiencing the most serious supply difficulties. Some of the measures discussed in the document are relevant to other science provision. We shall continue to monitor the demand for teachers of all subjects and to consider where further action might be necessary.

Literacy

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will rank in ascending order by his country the number of weekly hours of reading time for each of the age groups (i) 15 to 24, (ii) 25 to 34, (iii) 35 to 44, (iv) 45 to 54, (v) 55 to 64 and (vi) 65 years and over in those Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries for which he has information;

(2) if he will rank in ascending order by country the total number of weekly hours of reading time in those Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries for which he has information;

(3) what information his Department holds on the incidence of functional illiteracy by age group for the British population.

Mr. Walden: This information is not available centrally.

School Closures

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of schools closed for each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86 inclusive, and the percentage of these closures which involved rural schools.

Mr. Dunn: Information on school closures is kept by calendar year. Numbers of closures approved by the Secretary of State or determined by local education authorities since 1979 are shown in the table.

Year	*Total school closures*	*Rural school closures*	*Rural school closures as a percentage of all closures*
1979	77	26	33·8
1980	110	45	40·9
1981	225	89	39·6
1982	247	76	30·8
1983	295	131	44·4
1984	259	103	39·8
1985	210	56	26·7
[1]1986	98	36	36·7

[1] To end of September.

Academic Year

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if there are any plans to alter the current three-term academic year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The National Association of Head Teachers, the Association of County Councils and, very recently, the National Union of Teachers have all issued consultative documents on this subject. I understand that the NAHT will be discussing the matter shortly with representatives of examining and validating bodies. We shall be interested to see the outcome of the consultations.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding the position in the talks on the pay of teachers in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received some 200 letters since the Coventry meeting in July. Nearly all have been critical of the Coventry heads of agreement. The most common criticism has been the reduced differentials for the present scale 4 and senior teachers. Other criticisms have included the long period of assimilation to the proposed new pay scale, and the reduced opportunities for promotion.

Single Sex Schools

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many single sex schools there are in England; if he will break down the numbers into local education authority areas, showing the number of schools *(a)* for boys and *(b)* for girls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The number of maintained single sex schools in England in January 1986 was 616. The breakdown by local education authority is as follows:

	Boys Schools	*Girls Schools*
Barking	1	1
Barnet	3	5
Bexley	3	3
Brent	2	2
Bromley	8	8
Croydon	7	7
Ealing	1	1
Enfield	4	3
Haringey	1	1
Harrow	2	2
Havering	2	2
Hillingdon	1	1
Hounslow	2	3
Kingston Upon Thames	4	4
Merton	4	4
Newham	3	3
Redbridge	1	1
Richmond Upon Thames		1
Sutton	7	5
Waltham Forest	5	5
Birmingham	12	13
Coventry	3	3
Dudley	1	
Sandwell	1	1
Walsall	1	1
Wolverhampton		1
Knowsley	1	1
Liverpool	11	11
St. Helens	2	2
Sefton	2	2
Wirral	9	8
Manchester	3	3
Stockport	1	1
Tameside	3	2
Trafford	8	8
Bradford	2	2
Kirklees	1	1
Leeds	4	5
Newcastle Upon Tyne	1	1
Sunderland	1	1
Inner London	38	41
Avon	3	4
Bedfordshire	1	1
Berkshire	6	8
Buckinghamshire	7	7
Cambridgeshire	1	1
Cheshire		1
Cornwall	1	
Derbyshire	2	2
Devon	5	5
Dorset	7	7
East Sussex	2	2
Essex	10	9
Gloucestershire	6	6
Hampshire	5	6
Hertfordshire	7	11
Humberside	6	5
Kent	33	36
Lancashire	6	5
Leicestershire	1	1
Lincolnshire	6	7
Norfolk	1	1
North Yorkshire	2	1
Northamptonshire	3	3
Nottinghamshire	1	2
Oxfordshire	2	2
Shropshire	2	1
Somerset	1	
Surrey	3	2
Warwickshire	2	2
West Sussex	3	3
Wiltshire	2	2
England	303	313

A and O-level Passes

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science pursuant to the answer of 22 October to the hon. Member for Leicester, East *Official Report*, column *885*, if he will now give comprehensive figures detailing the number of passes attained in A and O-levels for Leicester and the east midlands.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected centrally.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the policy sub-committee of Manchester Education Committee concerning his proposal to establish city technology colleges; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has recently received a letter from Councillor Harris, Chair of the Policy Sub-Committee of the Manchester City Council Education Committee. He will be replying shortly, and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Library.

TRANSPORT

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the number of orange badges issued to people who are registered blind in (i) inner London, (ii) outer London, (iii) metropolitan districts, (iv) non-metropolitan counties in England, (v) Wales and (vi) Scotland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is not collected centrally in the form requested. In the light of details supplied by some local authorities it is estimated there are currently some 24,000 such badge holders throughout Britain.

Road Assessment Studies, London

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to publish the consultants' reports on the four London road assessment studies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Greenwich on 27 October at column *40*.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to improve communications, other than by rail, from the north east to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our aim is to ensure that the network of motorways and trunk roads is adequate to meet current and future needs. These include the need to provide access to the Channel tunnel from all parts of the country. The current construction programme includes schemes to upgrade existing north-south routes and roads to the tunnel in Kent.

Marine Pilotage

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what safeguards he intends to introduce to

ensure that commercial pressures on ports to reduce costs will not reduce standards within the marine pilotage service;

(2) if he has any plans to change the current arrangements for marine pilotage so as to improve safety of navigation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government intend to introduce proposals for legislation as soon as possible which will transfer responsibility for pilotage to the harbour authorities. The legislation will require authorities to provide the pilotage services which are necessary to secure safety of navigation, and there is no reason to believe that the authorities will act irresponsibly in meeting this requirement.

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now list those harbour authorities to which he intends to transfer pilotage responsibilities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The terms of the new legislation will determine which harbour authorities will become responsible for pilotage. A list of the relevant authorities will be made available when the legislative proposals are published.

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list information available to him as to which harbour authorities have experience in running pilotage services.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Of the 45 pilotage authorities which have responsibility for pilotage, 29 are harbour authorities; those harbour authorities which are active in this capacity are as listed:

Aberdeen Harbour Board
Associated British Ports
Berwick Harbour Commissioners
Bristol Port Authority
Coleraine Harbour Commissioners
Dundee Port Authority
Fenland District Council
Fraserburgh Harbour Commissioners
Grampian Regional Council
Inverness Harbour Trust
Irvine Harbour Company
King's Lynn Conservancy Board
Lancaster Port Commissioners
Lerwick Harbour Trust
Littlehampton Harbour Board
Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners
Manchester Ship Canal Company
Mersey Docks and Harbour Company
Montrose Harbour Trust
Orkney Islands Council
Peterhead Harbour Trust
Shetland Islands Council
Wick Harbour Trust

In addition, local harbour authorities are invariably among the interests represented in the membership of other pilotage authorities or their pilotage committees. In a few cases, staff are shared by a pilotage authority and a harbour authority.

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of cost savings arising from economies in administration and operation as a result of the proposed integration of pilotage with other port services.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend's earlier question on 25 July at column *515*.

Legislative Proposals (Savings)

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to quantify estimated savings expected to be achieved from legislative proposals emanating from his Department.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is already my right hon. Friend's policy to do so wherever possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Industry Scheme

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General if he will consider the extension of the community industry scheme to allow participants to stay on the scheme for two years instead of one.

Mr. Lee: No.

Holidays

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General if he will rank in ascending order for the most recent year for which figures are available the number of public holidays and days of annual leave entitlement per year per employee in each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country for which he has information.

Mr. Lee: Different countries apply different conventions to the definition and measurement of holidays so their statistics are not wholly comparable. However, the table gives the latest information which is available ranked in ascending order of annual leave entitlement.

Number of public holidays and days of annual leave
Annual entitlement per employee in 1980 (unless otherwise stated)

	Public holidays	*Annual leave entitlement*
Japan	12	6-20[3]
Germany	11-13[2]	18-33[3]
United Kingdom	8	20[4]
Norway[5]	9	20[3]
Canada[6]	10·6	20·3[3]
Italy	9-10	20-26[1, 7]
Portugal	12-14	21-30[1]
Netherlands	8	23[3]
Denmark	9·5	24[1]
France	10	24[1]
Belgium	10	24[1]
Sweden	10	25[1]
Luxembourg	10	25[3,1]
Austria[6]	12	26[3]

Notes:
[1] Statutory minimum.
[2] Varies according to state.
[3] Average entitlement.
[4] Leave to which over 85 per cent. of full-time employees in Great Britain were entitled in 1981.
[5] Figures for 1978.
[6] Figures for 1977.
[7] Varies according to industry.
Source for other countries: Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (*Living Conditions in OECD Countries*, 1986).

Hours of Work

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General what information his Department collects on the trends in average hours actually worked per week per employed person and activity sector for England and Wales.

Mr. Lee: An index of average weekly hours worked by operatives in manufacturing industries in Great Britain (but not in England and Wales separately) is published each month in table 1.12 of the labour market data section of *Employment Gazette*. This index is based on the average basic hours worked by operatives covered by national wage agreements, together with the hours of overtime worked and hours lost through short-time working.

Table 5.6 of the labour market data section of *Employment Gazette* gives information from the new earnings survey, which is conducted each April, on average weekly hours of full-time employees in Great Britain in manufacturing industries and all industries and services. Table 5.4 gives similar information for certain industries for full-time manual employees by industry in the United Kingdom for October.

Estimates of the average hours worked by persons in employment in all industries in England and Wales in the spring of each year can also be derived from the labour force survey.

Special Employment Measures

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what estimates there are for expenditure on each special employment measure, including YTS, for each year from 1980 for each area manpower board in England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Lee: I regret that it is not possible to provide the information requested except at a disproportionate cost.

Self-employment

Mr. David Howell asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards self-employment, with specific reference to current Inland Revenue practice in relation to assessment for income tax and national insurance contributions.

Mr. Lee: The Government is committed to encouraging self-employment as an important source of enterprise and innovation, new business formation and jobs. I welcome the marked increase in the number of self-employed people, from just over 1·8 million in 1979 to more than 2·7 million now. More than 179,000 self-employed people have benefited from our enterprise allowance scheme.

Paragraph 6.12 of the White paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794) recorded progress being made by Inland Revenue and DHSS to improve tax and national insurance procedures for the self-employed. The Government remain committed to seeking further such improvements where these are possible.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

Mr. Holt asked the Paymaster General what plans there are to assist more easily and generously long-term unemployed men and women to relocate to take up employment.

Mr. Lee: Long-term unemployed people, like other jobseekers, may apply for assistance under the travel to interview scheme, which pays fares to jobseekers attending interviews with employers beyond daily travelling distance of their homes. Restart interviewers give long-term unemployed people advice about this scheme in appropriate cases. There are no plans at present to extend this scheme.

Mr. Holt asked the Paymaster General how many men and women over 50 years of age who had been long-term unemployed are now in full-time employment in the north-east region.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

Disabled People

Mr. McWilliam asked the Paymaster General if he will list the total number of exemption permits issued by the Manpower Services Commission in relation to the requirement of employers to employ a minimum of 3 per cent. registered disabled people in each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: Information is not collected centrally on the number of permits issued under the terms of the quota scheme. However, figures are available on the numbers of employers who were below quota on 1 June and to whom permits had been issued during the previous 12 months. Figures for the last seven years are set out in the table. The issue of a permit enables an employer who is not employing the 3 per cent. quota of registered disabled people lawfully to engage a specified number of workers who are not so registered. However, the permit does not exempt the employer from the duty under the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act to employ the quota.

Number of employers issued with permits in the 12 months to 1 June

Year	*Number*
1980	22,001
1981	21,183
1982	19,796
1983	18,536
1984	18,769
1985	18,681
1986	18,840

Mr. McWilliam asked the Paymaster General if he will list those companies with 1,000 or more employees for which an exemption certificate in respect of employment of disabled people was issued during the last 12 months for which this information is available.

Mr. Lee: Information about the application of the quota scheme provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act to individual employers has been treated by successive Governments as confidential and is not disclosed without their agreement.

Minimum Wage Policy

Mr. Galley asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made of the employment consequences of a minimum wage policy.

Mr. Lee: Using the earnings information from the 1985 new earnings survey, we estimate that a national minimum wage of £80 per week (the level implied in the TUC/Labour party document "Low Pay: Policies and Priorities") could result in job losses ranging between 60,000 and 600,000 over a period of time. This large range reflects uncertainty about the effect of a minimum wage

on the structure of earnings, and the extent to which higher paid workers would be able to secure compensating wage increases to restore previous differentials.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will indicate the nature of each change in the basis of the calculation of the total number of unemployed persons since 1979 and the effect, in terms of numbers, on the unemployed register consequent upon each change.

Mr. Lee: A full description of all the changes since 1979 which have so far affected the published unemployment figures was given on page 422 of the October 1986 edition of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is the Library.

Availability for Work Regulations

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General in which department, within the local office, the claim advisers administering the new availability for work regulations will be; and who will be their line managers.

Mr. Lee: Claimant advisers will operate from unemployment benefit offices and will replace unemployment review officers in the DHSS advising on benefits and re-employment opportunities. They will be managed separately by team managers who will report directly to their respective regional offices.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate the nature and size of the current deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Alan Clark: In September, trade in manufactures showed a deficit of £0·6 billion.

Post Office

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the financial targets set for the Post Office for 1985-86 and 1986-87, respectively.

Mr. Pattie: As I announced on 24 July 1985, at columns *565-66*, each of royal mails and counters was required to secure a 4·5 per cent. return on turnover, on the current cost accounting convention, before tax, but after interest for the financial year 1985-86.

As to 1986-87, I announced on 31 July this year that the postal business of the Post Office had been set an overall target of securing a return on turnover of 3·25 per cent. before interest and tax in each of the years 1986-87 to 1988-89. The full text of my announcement was as follows:

"Last year the Post Office moved towards the separation of the Royal Mail and Counters businesses, and earlier this year it announced its decision to divide Royal Mail into two separate businesses, Letters and Parcels. The process of establishing these three businesses and of separating their accounts will not be complete for about another two years. This limits the robustness of the available figures.

But after consulting the Post Office I have decided that the time is right for separate medium-term targets to be set for the three businesses for the three years 1986-87 to 1988-89. National Girobank is already targeted separately.

Last year the Government set the Royal Mail business the performance aim of reducing its real unit costs by 2·2 per cent. in 1985-86 compared with 1984-85, and the Counters business was targeted for a reduction of 1·5 per cent. compared with 1984-85. In the event, Counters achieved its target and Royal Mail bettered its target by 0·2 per cent. I congratulate the management and work force of the Post Office on their achievement.

Nevertheless, I am confident that those employed in the Post Office understand that in order to protect the future of the businesses, it is essential to retain existing customers and attract new work. Further improvements in efficiency remain the key to maintaining and improving the Post Office's competitiveness.

Accordingly I have set the Post Office the target of achieving a reduction of 5·5 per cent. in the real unit costs of the postal business at the end of 1988-89, compared with 1985-86, with at least a 1·5 per cent. reduction to be achieved by the end of 1986-87. I have agreed with the Post Office that the component businesses should be set individual targets to reduce real unit costs over the same period. These will be 6 per cent. for Letters; 5·4 per cent. for Parcels; and 3·7 per cent. for Counters.

The lengthy process of separating the accounts of the new businesses raises problems in attempting to set financial objectives. The review that was announced in July last year of the financial objective for Royal Mail and Counters concluded that the appropriate overall objective was a return on turnover of 3·25 per cent. before net interest and tax, on the current cost accounting basis, in each of the years 1986-87 to 1988-89.

Although the Post Office has proposed profit targets for each of the three businesses in each of those years there must be uncertainty about the reliability of the underlying assumptions until further progress has been made with the new information systems.

To support the overall target of 3·25 per cent. in 1986-87 I have agreed with the Post Office that the three businesses should secure returns in that year on the same basis as the overall target. These will be 3 per cent. for Letters; 6 per cent. for Parcels; and 1·3 per cent. for Counters.

It is my intention before the end of March next year to agree with the Post Office and announce target returns for the three businesses for 1987-88."

Post Office (Investment)

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the amount of Post Office investment approved for each year, individually since 1983, together with his estimate of the amount to be approved for 1986-87 and 1987-88; what the amount will be in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The annual public expenditure White Paper states the level of investment in fixed assets agreed for the succeeding financial year for individual nationalised industries. For the Post Office's postal business the figures for the years 1982-83 were as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	115·0
1983-84	130·0
1984-85	156·8
1985-86	134·0
1986-87	98·0

During 1985-86 the level of investment approved for that year was increased to £164 million. The investment approved for 1987-88 and estimates of expenditure on fixed assets in 1988-89 and 1989-90 will be published in the forthcoming public expenditure White Paper.

Productivity

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the comparative

productivity of foreign-owned firms operating in the United Kingdom and British firms over the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The table compares the value added per employee in United Kingdom manufacturing industry by United Kingdom and foreign owned enterprises for 1981 and 1983. Data are available only for every second year, the most recent being 1983. The apparent significant difference between the productivity of United Kingdom and foreign firms may, at least in part, be explained by the disproportionate presence of foreign owned firms in high value added sectors of the economy.

Gross value added per employee by United Kingdom and foreign owned enterprises in the United Kingdom manufacturing industry

	1981 £	*1983* £
United Kingdom owned enterprises	9,631	12,323
Foreign owned enterprises	12,355	16,626

Source Annual Censuses of Production.

Cigarette Sales

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the volume of cigarette sales in the United Kingdom in 1980-81, 1985-86 and in the first three months of the present financial year; and what proportion of the total volume of those sales was met by imported cigarettes in each of those periods.

Mr. Butcher: The information available on quantities of cigarettes released for consumption in United Kingdom as compiled by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is as follows:

Quantities of cigarettes released for home consumption

	Total clearances *Million*	*Proportion accounted for by imports* *Per cent.*
1980-81	119,185	1·5
1985-86	96,304	11·0
1986-87 April-June	13,190	8·1

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Chemical Exports (Iraq)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the chemicals which are on the restricted list for export to Iraq.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Lawnmowers (Noise)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice he is providing to retailers about the steps which they should take in relation to lawnmowers in stock at the time of implementation of the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986 applies to lawnmowers manufactured on or after 1 July 1987. Retailers existing stock at the time of implementation will therefore not be affected.

Retailers association along with other interested organisations are kept informed of the progress of the lawnmowers directive and the regulations through our normal general circulars.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if batch sampling of new lawnmowers will be permitted after the implementing of the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement outlining the policy objectives which Her Majesty's Government are seeking to achieve by making the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986.

Mr. Butcher: The regulations arise from the requirement on the United Kingdom to implement EC directive 84/538/EEC. The directive removes those technical barriers to trade between member states which arise because member states have different national rules on noise levels which they apply to lawnmowers. Thus, the UK policy objective of the regulations is to gain the advantage for British lawnmower manufacturers of guaranteed access to markets in member states without having to comply with many different standards. It is also part of the general UK policy to complete the internal market by 1992. This policy was affirmed by heads of member states at the treaty conference in December 1985.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the cost to public funds in travel and accommodation of public servants during the negotiations in the EEC of the directive on lawnmower harmonisation of noise emission standards; and how many official and ministerial meetings took place in the course of negotiations.

Mr. Butcher: No such estimate can be made. The lawnmowers proposal was one of a package adopted in 1984 and was negotiated (over a number of years) together with others in a sometimes sporadic fashion. Meetings attended by United Kingdom officials usually covered more than just the lawnmowers proposal.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many testing centres he plans to authorise to conduct tests in accordance with the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986; and what criteria he will apply in determining the location of such centres.

Mr. Butcher: Nine test laboratories have already been appointed to carry out tests. Any test organisation can apply to be appointed and one of the criteria for appointment is satisfying the national measurement accreditation service requirements. There are no criteria for determining the location of the laboratories.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what steps he is taking to control the level of charges levied for testing lawnmowers under the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimate he has made of the additional costs which will be required to be borne by the lawnmower manufacturing industry in consequence of the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 November 1986]: The additional cost to manufacturers will depend largely on the extent to which their lawnmowers already meet the specified noise levels.

The Lawnmower (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986 implements the European Communities article 100 directive, which was adopted in September 1984 and comes into force on 1 July 1987. The purpose of this directive is to harmonise member states' laws relating to the permissible sound power level of certain categories of lawnmower. Prior to being placed onto the market, lawnmowers will have to be tested and certified to show they conform to the requirements of the directive. Conforming products will have free access to the Community market. Obviously it is hoped that the advantages to be gained by the United Kingdom's Lawnmower industry from a more open Community market will outweigh the initial additional costs.

With regard to the control of charges for tests, my Department has agreed with the manufacturers and the appointed test laboratories to allow for market forces to dictate the charges. Manufacturers are therefore able to shop around and negotiate an acceptable price.

ENVIRONMENT

Sports Ministers (Conference)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the fifth conference of European Ministers responsible for sport.

Mr. Tracey: The United Kingdom was represented by officials from the Department and the director general of the Sports Council. The agenda was divided into two themes: progress in European sports co-operation 1984-1986; and items of current political concern. A number of resolutions were adopted, all of which were acceptable to the United Kingdom.

In particular, the conference agreed on the need to extend the impact of the European anti-doping charter for sport adopted at the last conference in Malta in 1984. Doping remains one of the intractable problems facing sport today. Although the ultimate sanction lies with the national and international sports federations, Governments can and should help through concerted international action. To this end the conference welcomed the positive contribution made by the Canadian Minister of Sport, and his offer to act as an intermediary to spread the Council of Europe's—and Canada's—work to other nations, including the United States of America and the Eastern block.

Another important agenda item was apartheid in sports. On the point of principle there was nothing between us: we all abhor apartheid and wish to see it ended in South Africa.

There were, however, differences — inspired by differences of constitution — in the way Governments viewed their locus in trying to prevent sporting contacts with South Africa. The resolution adopted is acceptable to the United Kingdom, and is compatible with Commonwealth and Her Majesty's Government's policy on sporting contacts with South Africa as enshrined in the "Gleneagles Agreement."

There was a useful discussion about the operation of the European convention on spectator violence and misbehaviour at sports events. Continuing political impetus was given to the work on violence associated with sport in general, and in particular to a study of the reasons behind violence with an aim to prevention.

The conference also adopted resolutions on ways to increase the impact of "Sport for All" policies with reference to participation by specific target groups. In particular, it endorsed the "European Charter for Sport for All: Disabled Persons"; and passed a resolution on "Sport for Prisoners and Young Delinquents". The conference agreed more generally the need to assess ways in which healthy participation for all might be promoted in a co-ordinated European programme through the study of injuries and their prevention.

Conference also supported resolutions on: international sports competitions, recognising that Governments share some concern for the wider implications of staging of major sports events; new partnerships in sport, conscious of the respective roles of Government, sport, commerce and media to the development of sport; sport and the environment, recognising the importance of reconciling sporting and environmental interests when and where these are in conflict; the 1988 Olympic Games, reaffirming support for the Olympic movement both now and in the future; and the future activities of the Council of Europe in the field of sport.

I shall place copies of these resolutions in the Library once the final texts have been issued by the conference secretariat.

Noise

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for his Department to collect and publish information on the percentage of the British population exposed to *(a)* road traffic noise and *(b)* aircraft noise.

Mr. Waldegrave: The "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", published annually by my Department and available in the Library of the House, includes statistics relating to noise from road traffic and aircraft. While my Department's research programme includes studies aimed at identifying more precisely the nature and scale of noise nuisance from various sources, we have no plans to expand these statistics at present.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many changes have been made in the contents and method of calculating rate support grant for 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: The Secretary of State's proposals for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement were set out in his consultation paper issued on 3 October, copies of which are in the Library. By comparison with the 1986-87 settlement, substantial increases are proposed in the provision for local authority expenditure, and in the

aggregate amount available for grant. A number of changes in the method of distributing grant are also proposed.

Travellers Caravans

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the number of travellers caravans on *(a)* authorised and *(b)* unauthorised sites in (i) Greater London and (ii) the London borough of Greenwich as revealed by the July 1986 census.

Mr. Tracey: Returns were received from 31 out of the 32 London boroughs. The figures are:

	Caravans on authorised sites	*Caravans on unauthorised sites*
Greater London	598	413
London Borough of Greenwich	78	66

Mrs. B. Johnston

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth can expect a reply to his two letters of 1 May and 25 July with reference to Mrs. B. Johnston of Age Concern, Rugby.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend's letter of 1 May was received in the Department and was identified as a matter for which the Department of Health and Social Security has responsibility. The correspondence then appears to have gone astray in the process of arranging its transfer. The Department can find no record of the further letter of 25 July. I apologise unreservedly for any difficulty that may have been caused to my hon. Friend, and I shall write to him so that we can now deal speedily with the issues raised by him and his constituent.

Grant-related Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the percentage change in grant-related expenditure for each local authority between 1986-87 and 1987-88, ranked from biggest increase to biggest decrease.

Mr. Ridley: The figures are as follows:

Per cent. change 1986-87 to 1987-88

	Provisional GREs
City of London	47·8
West Yorkshire Police	23·6
Merseyside Police	21·6
Easington	18·4
South Yorkshire Police	13·5
Greater Manchester Police	12·0
South Yorkshire Fire	11·1
Tyne & Wear Fire	9·6
West Yorkshire Fire	9·4
Metropolitan Police	9·0
Merseyside PTA	8·9
Greater Manchester Fire	8·9
Merseyside Fire	8·7
West Midlands Fire	8·3
Newham	8·2
West Midlands PTA	7·8
Greater London Fire	7·6
Northumberland	7·1
Derbyshire	6·6
Suffolk	6·6
Hounslow	6·2
Cornwall	6·1
Dorset	6·1
Greater Manchester PTA	6·1
Gloucestershire	6·0
Lincolnshire	6·0
Lancashire	5·7
Cambridgeshire	5·7
Islington	5·7
Norfolk	5·7
Buckinghamshire	5·6
Tower Hamlets	5·5
Staffordshire	5·5
Cheshire	5·3
Essex	5·3
Cleveland	5·3
Leicestershire	5·3
North Yorkshire	5·3
Somerset	5·3
Durham	5·3
Warwickshire	5·2
West Sussex	5·2
Wandsworth	5·2
Berkshire	5·1
Waltham Forest	5·1
Devon	5·1
Kent	5·0
Brent	5·0
Surrey	5·0
Humberside	4·9
Cumbria	4·9
Hackney	4·8
South Tyneside	4·8
Nottinghamshire	4·7
Barking and Dagenham	4·7
Sefton	4·7
Oxfordshire	4·7
Northamptonshire	4·7
Wiltshire	4·6
Lambeth	4·6
Shropshire	4·6
Sheffield	4·6
Bradford	4·5
Hereford and Worcester	4·5
Avon	4·5
Sunderland	4·4
Enfield	4·4
Birmingham	4·4
West Yorkshire PTA	4·3
Hillingdon	4·3
Wolverhampton	4·3
Bedfordshire	4·3
Hertfordshire	4·3
Hampshire	4·3
Bexley	4·2
East Sussex	4·2
Wigan	4·2
Redbridge	4·1
Kingston-upon-Thames	4·0
Wakefield	4·0
Rotherham	4·0
Bury	3·9
Dudley	3·9
Newcastle upon Tyne	3·9
Sandwell	3·8
South Yorkshire PTA	3·8
Knowsley	3·8
Kirklees	3·7
Havering	3·7
Stockport	3·7
ILEA	3·6
Camden	3·5
Salford	3·5

	Provisional GREs
Croydon	3·5
Coventry	3·5
Rochdale	3·5
Bolton	3·5
Calderdale	3·5
Richmond-upon-Thames	3·5
Manchester	3·4
Isle of Wight	3·4
Bromley	3·4
Merton	3·4
Walsall	3·4
Doncaster	3·4
North Tyneside	3·3
Barnet	3·3
Ealing	3·3
Barnsley	3·2
Oldham	3·2
Harrow	3·2
Haringey	3·1
Solihull	3·1
Sutton	3·1
St Helens	3·0
Trafford	3·0
Westminster	2·9
Leeds	2·7
Tameside	2·6
Ashford	2·5
Wirral	2·4
Gateshead	2·0
Liverpool	1·8
Greenwich	1·7
Southwark	0·8
Blackpool	0·7
South Holland	0·2
Kensington and Chelsea	0·2
Lewisham	0·0
West Midlands Police	−0·2
Hammersmith and Fulham	−1·1
Eastbourne	−1·1
Boston	−1·4
Horsham	−1·7
Thamesdown	−1·9
Bassetlaw	−2·3
South Shropshire	−2·5
Warrington	−2·7
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	−3·0
Plymouth	−3·1
Stockton-on-Tees	−3·2
Hinckley and Bosworth	−3·3
Welwyn Hatfield	−3·4
Tendring	−3·4
Barrow in Furness	−3·5
North Cornwall	−3·6
Huntingdon	−3·7
Broxbourne	−3·8
Thurrock	−3·8
Lancaster	−3·8
Torbay	−3·9
Fylde	−4·0
Fenland	−4·0
Blackburn	−4·1
Mansfield	−4·1
Poole	−4·1
Bracknell	−4·3
West Somerset	−4·3
West Derbyshire	−4·4
Peterborough	−4·4
Forest Heath	−4·4
Preston	−4·5
Dacorum	−4·5
South Lakeland	−4·5
Wellingborough	−4·5
Wimborne	−4·6
North Hertfordshire	−4·6
Crawley	−4·6
Halton	−4·7

	Provisional GREs
Shepway	−4·7
St. Albans	−4·7
East Devon	−4·7
West Oxfordshire	−4·7
Middlesbrough	−4·8
Southampton	−4·8
East Hertfordshire	−4·8
South Hams	−4·8
Northumbria Police	−4·9
New Forest	−4·9
Harrogate	−4·9
Bournemouth	−5·0
Kingswood	−5·0
Worcester	−5·0
Thanet	−5·0
Rushcliffe	−5·0
Carlisle	−5·0
Rossendale	−5·0
East Lindsey	−5·0
North Kesteven	−5·1
Weymouth and Portland	−5·1
Boothferry	−5·1
Oxford	−5·2
Stratford on Avon	−5·2
Durham	−5·2
Sedgefield	−5·3
Teignbridge	−5·3
South Kesteven	−5·3
Gosport	−5·3
Erewash	−5·3
Rutland	−5·4
Penwith	−5·4
York	−5·4
Selby	−5·4
North Dorset	−5·4
Watford	−5·4
Harborough	−5·4
Portsmouth	−5·5
Brighton	−5·5
Christchurch	−5·5
Great Yarmouth	−5·5
Wear Valley	−5·5
Craven	−5·5
East Cambridgeshire	−5·5
Eden	−5·5
Breckland	−5·6
Hastings	−5·6
Norwich	−5·6
Stevenage	−5·6
Blyth Valley	−5·6
Colchester	−5·6
West Dorset	−5·6
Ashfield	−5·7
Stoke-on-Trent	−5·7
Vale of White Horse	−5·7
Oswestry	−5·7
Blaby	−5·7
Scarborough	−5·7
Redditch	−5·7
Richmondshire	−5·7
Lewes	−5·7
Lincoln	−5·7
South Bedfordshire	−5·8
Rochford	−5·8
Wychavon	−5·8
Hereford	−5·8
Fareham	−5·8
Southend-on-Sea	−5·9
Maldon	−5·9
Nottingham	−5·9
Shrewsbury and Atcham	−5·9
Wyre	−5·9
St. Edmundsbury	−5·9
Adur	−5·9
Winchester	−5·9
Chorley	−5·9

	Provisional GREs
Rother	−5·9
Reading	−5·9
Newbury	−6·0
Melton	−6·0
Alnwick	−6·0
Three Rivers	−6·0
Wokingham	−6·0
Derby	−6·0
Gelding	−6·0
Cheltenham	−6·0
Bath	−6·0
South Cambridgeshire	−6·0
Northampton	−6·0
Darlington	−6·0
Canterbury	−6·0
Chester	−6·1
Berwick-upon-Tweed	−6·1
Carrick	−6·1
Tynedale	−6·1
Restormel	−6·1
Chesterfield	−6·1
Hertsmere	−6·1
Stafford	−6·2
Windsor and Maidenhead	−6·2
Babergh	−6·2
Gloucester	−6·2
Congleton	−6·2
South Norfolk	−6·2
Stroud	−6·2
Glandord	−6·2
Pendle	−6·3
North Devon	−6·3
North West Leicestershire	−6·3
Harlow	−6·3
Worthing	−6·3
Epping Forest	−6·3
Waverley	−6·4
Suffolk Coastal	−6·4
Macclesfield	−6·4
Cambridge	−6·4
Ryedale	−6·4
Salisbury	−6·4
Ipswich	−6·4
Cannock Chase	−6·4
Rugby	−6·4
Mendip	−6·4
Epsom and Ewell	−6·4
East Hampshire	−6·4
Reigate and Banstead	−6·4
Woodspring	−6·5
Eastleigh	−6·5
Chichester	−6·5
Sedgemoor	−6·5
Cherwell	−6·5
Burnley	−6·5
Forest of Dean	−6·5
Cotswold	−6·6
North Shropshire	−6·6
Purbeck	−6·6
North Wiltshire	−6·6
North Bedfordshire	−6·6
Braintree	−6·7
North Norfolk	−6·7
Tandridge	−6·7
South Somerset	−6·7
West Wiltshire	−6·7
Arun	−6·7
Guildford	−6·7
Lichfield	−6·7
Oadby and Wigston	−6·7
Torridge	−6·8
Caradon	−6·8
Mid Sussex	−6·8
Rushmoor	−6·8
Vale Royal	−6·8
Waveney	−6·8

	Provisional GREs
Bridgnorth	−6·9
Charnwood	−6·9
Northavon	−6·9
South Ribble	−6·9
Mid Devon	−6·9
Crewe and Nantwich	−7·0
Tonbridge and Malling	−7·0
Newcastle-under-Lyme	−7·0
East Northamptonshire	−7·0
South Derbyshire	−7·0
West Devon	−7·0
Warwick	−7·1
Cleethorpes	−7·1
Bristol	−7·1
Exeter	−7·1
Wealden	−7·1
South Oxfordshire	−7·1
Tyne and Wear PTA	−7·2
Wansbeck	−7·2
Daventry	−7·2
Wansdyke	−7·2
Medina	−7·2
Kerrier	−7·2
Dover	−7·2
Gillingham	−7·2
Woking	−7·2
Mid Bedfordshire	−7·3
Elmbridge	−7·3
West Lindsey	−7·3
Brentwood	−7·3
Swale	−7·3
Test Valley	−7·3
Surrey Heath	−7·4
Nuneaton and Bedworth	−7·4
Aylesbury Vale	−7·4
Derwentside	−7·5
Newark	−7·5
Broadland	−7·5
East Yorkshire	−7·5
South Staffordshire	−7·5
Wyre Forest	−7·5
East Staffordshire	−7·6
Castle Point	−7·6
Spelthorne	−7·6
Chester-le-Street	−7·6
Slough	−7·7
Hambleton	−7·7
Bromsgrove	−7·7
Beverley	−7·7
Malvern Hills	−7·7
High Peak	−7·7
Chelmsford	−7·7
Leominster	−7·7
South Wight	−7·7
Maidstone	−7·8
Uttlesford	−7·8
Holderness	−7·8
Broxtowe	−7·8
Rochester upon Medway	−7·8
The Wrekin	−7·9
Castle Morpeth	−7·9
Taunton Deane	−7·9
Hartlepool	−8·0
Mole Valley	−8·0
Amber Valley	−8·0
Hove	−8·0
West Lancashire	−8·1
Great Grimsby	−8·1
Basingstoke and Deane	−8·1
Kettering	−8·1
Dartford	−8·1
North Warwickshire	−8·1
Basildon	−8·2
Tunbridge Wells	−8·2
Copeland	−8·2
Scunthorpe	−8·4

	Provisional GREs
Leicester	−8·4
Tewkesbury	−8·4
Gravesham	−8·4
Teesdale	−8·5
Havant	−8·6
Milton Keynes	−8·7
Runnymede	−8·7
South Northamptonshire	−8·7
Corby	−8·8
Chiltern	−8·8
North East Derbyshire	−8·8
Kennet	−8·9
South Bucks	−8·9
Hart	−9·0
Ribble Valley	−9·0
Tamworth	−9·0
Ellesmere Port and Neston	−9·1
Sevonoaks	−9·1
Langbaurgh	−9·1
Allerdale	−9·3
Luton	−9·3
Kingston upon Hull	−9·5
South Herefordshire	−9·6
Staffordshire Moorlands	−10·2
Wycombe	−10·5
Bolsover	−10·6
Mid Suffolk	−11·6
Hyndburn	−13·2
Isles of Scilly	−19·5

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the total and *(b)* the percentage year-on-year change in the grant-related expenditure of (i) the Inner London education authority and (ii) the Metropolitan police, in each year from 1981-82.

Mr. Ridley: The figures are as follows:

	Inner London education authority		*Metropolitan police*	
	£ million	*Percentage change on previous year per cent.*	*£ million*	*Percentage change on previous year per cent.*
1981-82	468·477	—	273·606	—
1982-83	509·273	+8·7	327·191	+19·6
1983-84	516·489	+1·4	345·921	+5·7
1984-85	533·033	+3·2	366·547	+6·0
1985-86	556·388	+4·4	384·948	+5·0
1986-87	545·294	−2·0	421·270	+9·4
[1]1987-88	564·731	+3·6	459·352	+9·0

[1] Provisional.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the national grant-related expenditure assessments of London Regional Transport in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88, consistent with the grant-related poundage reduction for spending at grant-related expenditure shown for each year; and if he will list the reasons for the changes between the years.

Mr. Ridley: The notional grant-related expenditure assessments (GREs) for London Regional Transport (LRT) in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 are as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	292·3
1986-87	489·3
[1]1987-88	365·6

[1] Provisional.

The increase in the notional GRE from 1985-86 to 1986-87 was due mainly to the introduction in 1986-87 of a new element relating to London Underground services, following a change made to the notional GRE formula to take account of rail services other than British Rail services supported under section 20 of the Transport Act 1968.

The fall in GRE in 1987-88 reflects the proposed change in the method of calculating the cost of financing LRT capital to bring it into line with the way that local authority capital expenditure is treated in GREs generally.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish *(a)* the total current expenditure and *(b)* total capital expenditure of each residuary body in 1986-87;

(2) if he will publish the relevant, total, current and grant-related expenditure of local authorities in total at plan, budget and at all later stages in each year from 1981-82 to 1987-88, estimated.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the responses to Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government"; and if he plans to publish a further White Paper on the subject of local government finance.

Mr. Ridley: I do not have the permission of respondents to publish their views. I shall, however, publish a summary of the representations received in due course. Further statements of Government policy on this subject will be made as and when appropriate.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the total cost to his Department of all preparatory work, both internal and external, and subsequent costs of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714).

Mr. Ridley: The costs attributable to the division in my Department responsible for the Green Paper between 1 November 1984 and 30 September 1986 were £773,100. This includes the cost of salaries, travel and subsistence, stationery, typing, cartographic, printing and computing services.

Rate Support Grant (Hertfordshire)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with the Hertfordshire county council regarding its level of rate support grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government has agreed to meet a delegation from Hertfordshire county council on Thursday 6 November to discuss the RSG settlement.

Newham (Direct Labour Organisation)

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, following his request for a special report on Newham's direct labour organisation, he has reached a decision on that organisation's future.

Dr. Boyson: The special report provided by the London borough of Newham shows that Newham's direct labour organisation made losses on major new construction

schemes totalling some £3·3 million over the period 1982-83 to 1984-85 with a loss in 1984-85 alone of over £2 million. The council has stopped awarding new major construction projects to its DLO for the time being, but despite this anticipates a further loss of around £2 million in 1985-86.

Having considered the report my right hon. Friend has today informed the borough, in accordance with his powers under section 17(5) of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, that with immediate effect its direct labour organisation shall no longer have power to undertake major new building work except as necessary to complete work already awarded to it.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total of local authorities' capital receipts at the end of each financial year from 1981-82 to 1985-86, showing the proportion of receipts backed by cash.

Mr. Ridley: Local authorities' capital receipts against the DOE-LA1 cash limit in each of the years 1981-82 to 1985-86, including receipts from health authorities and repayments of grants and advances, were as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	1,335
1982-83	2,235
1983-84	2,230
1984-85	2,150
1985-86	2,318

Information on the accumulated capital receipts held by local authorities was not collected by the Government before 1984-85. At the end of that year the total of accumulated receipts giving rise to spending permission in later years was £6·2 billion. Some of these receipts were notional, such as leasing disposals. The cash from much of the remainder had been used for such purposes as repaying debt and financing capitalised housing repairs. After allowing for such factors only £3·7 billion out of the £6·2 billion spending permission could be converted into cash. But very little even of this £3·7 billion was actually held on deposit at a bank. Most of it had been temporarily lent for other purposes within the authority and could be turned into cash only if the authority undertook further external borrowing. The total external loan debt of English local authorities at 31 March 1986 was £33·6 billion.

Information on the position at the end of 1985-86 is being collected at present and will be published when available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the revenue expenditure on health and community health services for each year from 1974-75 giving information adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator, *(b)* National Health Service pay and prices and *(c)* the gross domestic product retail price index for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Health and personal social services expenditure

£ million

	Cash	*Cash adjusted (at 1985-86[1] prices) by:* *GDP deflator*	*HPSS pay and price factors*[1]	*RPI*[2]
1974-75	108	366	385	360
1975-76	154	414	430	410
1976-77	179	426	440	414
1977-78	202	421	455	409
1978-79	234	441	481	438
1978-79	289	467	496	468
1980-81	373	508	506	519
1981-82	420	520	523	524
1982-83	452	522	527	526
1983-84	485	536	538	539
1984-85	508	539	535	538
1985-86	537	537	537	537
1986-87	569	549	n.a.[2]	n.a.[2]

[1] There is no separate Health Service Index or Retail Price Index for Northern Ireland, and national indices have therefore been used.
[2] Indices not yet available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

New Prison, Arncott

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give an estimated timetable of the construction of the new prison at Arncott.

Mr. Mellor: The construction of the new prison at Arncott (Bicester) is planned to commence in the autumn of 1987 and to be completed in the latter half of 1991.

Operation Condor

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide figures detailing arrests resulting from the searches conducted at the Afro-Caribbean Club and other property and premises searched during Operation Condor;

(2) how many people were arrested as a result of Operation Condor directly; and how many were arrested and subsequently charged with public order offences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that there were 86 arrests on 24 July arising from Operation Condor. None of those arrested was subsequently charged with any public order offence.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many locations other than the Afro-Caribbean Club were searched by the police as part of Operation Condor; and if he will list these other locations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that a total of 12 locations were searched under warrant, including the Afro-Caribbean Club. Eight of these locations were within the Brixton division and four elsewhere in south London. It would not be appropriate to publicise the addresses.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of arrests for the evening of 24 July in the police divisions which cover the London borough of Lambeth.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that during the period 4.30 pm to midnight, 43 people were arrested and taken to police stations within the Lambeth division. A further 37 people were arrested and taken to police stations outside the division.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers were used during Operation Condor; and if he will provide the information by rank and police division.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: 798. The officers were drawn from divisions and branches throughout the Metropolitan police district and it would be possible to give a breakdown by rank and division only at disproportionate cost.

Plastic Bullets (Lambeth)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department where plastic bullets are stored in Lambeth and in what quantities; what officers in Lambeth police district are trained in the use of plastic bullets; at what level decisions are made for their deployment; and what criteria are used in reaching a decision for deployment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not the practice to disclose where in the Metropolitan police district plastic baton rounds are stored or which officers have been trained in their use. As to the other points raised, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 19 May 1986 (*Official Report*, columns *15-16.*)

Alcohol Test Computers

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implications of the use of breath check alcohol test computers, by private individuals, for road safety.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is open to individuals to use such self-test equipment as they wish. The report of the Blennerhassett committee pointed out limitations of self-testing equipment, particularly that alcohol will be underestimated if a test is carried out before the alcohol consumed has been absorbed.

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has conducted an analysis of the total security costs relating to the 1986 Conservative party conference in Bournemouth; what proportion of this will be borne by Her Majesty's Government; and whether he has any proposals to change the basis on which the costs of security at the major party conferences are funded.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not conducted such an analysis. 51 per cent. of expenditure incurred by the Dorset police authority on the policing of the conference will be met by the Home Office through police grant in the usual way. Block grant from the Department of the Environment makes a further contribution to the costs. There are no plans to make any special arrangements for the funding of such costs. Certain expenditure incurred by the Conservative party on security at the conference may qualify for reimbursement from central funds under the scheme announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her reply to a question by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) on 25 July.

Deportation

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the information supplied by the hon. Member for Hartlepool, he will deport the individual named on the ground that his presence is not conducive to the public good; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I am writing to the hon. Member.

Prisoners (Deaths)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to the answer of 23 October, if he will break down the number of deaths for each year other than from natural causes, by cause and by coroner's verdict;

(2) if he will list in each year from 1980 to 1985 the number of deaths from non-natural causes in each prison in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has had any representations in respect of the number of suicides in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We receive very few representations about the number of suicides in prison. The interpretation of statistics on prison suicide was one of the issues considered in the report of the Working Group on Suicide Prevention, published on 5 September.

Crimes and Offences (Fines)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current maximum fines which can be imposed by the courts for *(a)* soliciting, *(b)* prostitution, *(c)* criminal damage, *(d)* drunk driving, *(e)* speeding, *(f)* assault and *(g)* selling lawnmowers which do not conform to the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations; and what plans he has for reviewing the maximum levels of fines for crimes and offences.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is set out in the table, except as regards prostitution which in itself is not an offence. For the more serious offences of assault and criminal damage, imprisonment is also available as a sanction.

We keep maximum penalties under constant review.

Offence	*Enactment*	*Maximum Fine*
Soliciting (of male by female)	Section 1 of the Street Offences Act 1959	Level 2 on the standard scale (£100) for first offence; level 3 (£400) for second or subsequent offence.
Soliciting (of male by male)	Section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956	Statutory maximum (£2,000) if prosecuted summarily; unlimited fine on indictment.

Offence	*Enactment*	*Maximum Fine*
Persistent soliciting of women/kerb crawling	Sections 1 and 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 1985	Level 3 on standard scale (£400).
Criminal Damage	Section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971 (for damage of more than £400); (for damage of £400 or less).	Unlimited fine on indictment; statutory maximum (£2,000) when tried summarily. Level 4 on the standard scale (£1,000).
Driving when unfit through drink/ with excess alcohol	Sections 5 (1) and 6(1)*(a)* of the Road Traffice Act 1972	Level 5 on the standard scale (£2,000).
Exceeding speed limit	Section 89(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984	Level 3 on the standard scale (£400).
Common assault	Section 42 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861	Level 3 on the standard scale (£400).
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	Section 47 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861	Unlimited fine on indictment; statutory maximum (£2,000) if tried summarily.
Sale of Lawnmowers contrary to the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986		£1,000

SCOTLAND

AIDS

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome were recorded in Scotland at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has about the trend in the number of cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome in Glasgow and the west of Scotland at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: By 31 October, 13 cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) had been recorded in Scotland. Five of these were from Glasgow and the west of Scotland. It is not possible to establish trends from this small number of cases. The Government's public education compaign is intended to warn the public generally, and particularly groups at special risk, of the danger that AIDS presents to the whole population. We are continuing to give this serious disease our urgent attention.

Health Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the revenue expenditure on health and community health services each year from 1974-75 giving information adjusted by *(a)* the domestic product deflator, *(b)* National Health Service pay and prices and *(c)* the retail price index for Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is given in the table. No separate NHS pay and price factors are maintained for Scotland. The figures at column 3 have therefore been constructed using NHS pay and price index data maintained for England by the Department of Health and Social Security. The amounts at column 4 have been converted using the Retail Price Index, which is constructed on a United Kingdom basis. Since the RPI measures the movement in the cost of goods and services purchased by an average domestic household, it is not an appropriate indicator of cost movements in Health Service expenditure.

Revenue Expenditure on Hospital and Community Health Services

£ million

	Cash	*Adjusted to 1985-86 prices by GDP Deflator*	*Adjusted to 1985-86 prices by NHS pay and prices index*	*Adjusted to 1985-86 prices by Retail Price Index*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1974-75	317	1,074	1,152	1,055
1975-76	414	1,115	1,167	1,104
1976-77	470	1,118	1,164	1,087
1977-78	540	1,128	1,231	1,096
1978-79	616	1,162	1,281	1,153
1979-80	736	1,188	1,270	1,190
1980-81	949	1,292	1,280	1,320
1981-82	1,063	1,317	1,325	1,326
1982-83	1,136	1,312	1,329	1,323
1983-84	1,205	1,333	1,342	1,341
1984-85	1,285	1,362	1,352	1,361
1985-86[1]	1,358	1,358	1,358	1,358

[1] Provisional

Chernobyl (Warnings)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take in the light of the report by Mr. David Webster on the performance of Government agencies in giving advice to the public concerning dangers arising from radioactive fallout from Chernobyl; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The Government are examining carefully their response to the Chernobyl accident to consider what

lessons can be learnt from all aspects of the event, including the giving of advice and information to the public, for application in any possible future accident involving the release of radioactivity.

Torness (Survey)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the scope of the survey and data to be provided by the common services agency of the Scottish Health Service to the South of Scotland electricty board and the Lothian health board as a base line health survey in the area around Torness power station; what is the estimated cost of this survey; and if his Department will meet this cost.

Mr. John MacKay: The initial base line study of data for the area around Torness power station which will be conducted by the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service is an examination of the incidence of all cancers in young persons (0-24 age group) and leukaemia and selected other cancers in adults in the period 1975-84 within 12·5 km and between 12·5 km and 25 km of the proposed reactor site.

The analysis will make use of existing data sets and the cost (estimated to be about £550) of this initial study will be met by the Common Services Agency.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Health Authorities (Membership)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he intends to invite recommendations for membership of health authorities in the future.

Mrs. Currie: In accordance with schedule 5 of the National Health Service Act 1977 we shall invite nominations by direct invitation to a number of specific interested bodies. As has been our practice in the past, we shall also invite hon. and right hon. Members to submit nominations, In accordance with the wishes of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, we shall be seeking to appoint women to a larger proportion of the appointments than in the past. We shall also, of course, always seek to ensure that each health authority's membership reflects as far as possible the community it serves.

Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how long the Royal Herbert hospital, Woolwich, hs been empty; what is the annual cost of maintaining the buildings; and what uses have been, or are likely to be, considered for the site.

Mrs. Currie: The Royal Herbert hospital at Woolwich is the responsibility of the South East Thames regional health authority, which is awaiting the result of an application for listed building consent for demolition. If successful, the planning permission already given for development will be put into action for disposal of the site. If consent is not obtained then alternative uses would have to be considered.

I am informed that the hospital closed down at the end of 1979. £22,000 per year is spent on security and a minimal sum on maintenance.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the following age categories *(a)* 15 to 24 years, *(b)* 25 to 44 years, *(c)* 45 to 54 years, *(d)* 55 to 64 years, *(e)* 65 to 74 years and *(f)* 75 to 84 years, the number of deaths from cervical carcinoma in the Peterborough health authority for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The information is shown in the table. Figures prior to 1982 are not comparable with those of later years as the Peterborough health district is not contermininous with the Peterborough district health authority.

Number of deaths with underlying cause of carcinoma of cervix uteri (ICD[1] (9) 180) to women usually resident in the Peterborough Health Areas 1979-1985

Area of usual residence	*Year*	*age-group* 15-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84
Peterborough Health District	1979	—	2	2	—	—	1
	1980	—	1	—	—	2	1
	1981	—	—	—	—	2	—
Peterborough District Health Authority	1982	—	1	2	—	1	3
	1983	—	2	1	1	3	2
	1984	—	3	1	1	1	1
	1985	—	2	—	2	1	—

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Housing Benefit

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish, in the same format as the answer of 5 July 1985, *Official Report*, columns *301-3*, the latest available estimates of: *(a)* recipients of housing benefit not on supplementary benefit, *(b)* the numbers of households affected by the rent taper change to be introduce in April 1987 and *(c)* the number of households losing entitlement to rent rebates; if he will give information on the changes to the housing benefit needs allowance by publishing a table showing the April 1987 needs allowances and disregards and the level at which they would stand if the updating formula previously used were still in force; and if he will also publish a table giving a detailed breakdown of the numbers of households losing: (i) less than 26p, (ii) 26 to 50p, and (ii) 51p to £1

and such other ranges of losses as may be appropriate as a combined result of both the taper and needs allowance changes, distinguishing as far as possible between pensioners, working and other households.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Operating Department Assistants

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the pay, conditions and hours of service of operating department assistants in the National Health Service;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* for each year since 1979 the number of operating department assistants leaving the service with the corresponding figures for recruitment.

Mrs. Currie: Remuneration and conditions of service of operating department assistants are matters for the Professional and Technical Staffs 'B' Whitley Council. A copy of the council handbook has been placed in the Library. Information about such staff leaving and entering the National Health Service is not collected centrally. Over the past few years the number of those employed in England has remained constant at around 2,700.

Pensions

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer of 29 October, he will define the term "pay day" in relation to the timing of the payment of retirement pension; and what estimate he has made of the maximum amount which could be lost between a pensioners' qualifying birth date and the first relevant pay day.

Mr. Lyell: The pay day is the day for each individual pensioner from which weekly sums of retirement pension become payable. The prescribed pay day for those retiring at present is Monday. Since pension is payable weekly in advance, the first pension payment is at most six days after the qualifying birthday and the date of retirement. The maximum difference is, therefore, six-sevenths of the weekly pension rate. However, pension is a weekly benefit and is never calculated on a daily basis.

The Department's leaflet NP 32, a copy of which is in the Library and which is sent automatically to all pensioners some three months before they reach pensionable age, advises pensioners that any delay between the date of retirement and the first pension pay day can be avoided by choosing the pension pay day as the date of retirement.

Resource Allocation Working Party

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of the resource allocation working party review.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) on 21 October 1986 at column *854*.

AIDS

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that the public are better aware of the dangers of acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and how to avoid the risk of becoming infected by the virus.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend the my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 28 October 1986 at column *123*.

General Household Survey

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the result of the 1985 general household survey questionnaire section on carers on pages 46 to 57 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: Analysis of the 1985 general household survey questionnaire section on carers will be published in the 1985 general household survey report which is expected to be ready at the end of next year.

Health Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the revenue expenditure on health and community health services for each year from 1974-75 giving information adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator, *(b)* National Health Service pay and prices and *(c)* the retail price index for (i) England and (ii) Wales.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Artificial Limbs (Review)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to respond to the detailed recommendations of the McColl Committee on its review of the artificial limbs and appliances services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 29 October 1986 at column *187*.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many mentally handicapped children remain in long-stay hospitals;

(2) when he expect his Department's information paper on mentally handicapped children in long-stay hospitals to be published;

(3) if he will set a date for letting all mentally handicapped children out of long-stay hospitals and into appropriate community facilities; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will meet representations from Exodus, the organisation pressing to bring mentally handicapped children out of long-stay hospitals; and if he will make a statement;

(5) when he last consulted with regional health authority chairmen about transferring all mentally handicapped children from long-stay hospitals to the community; and what conclusions were reached;

(6) how many mentally handicapped children have been transferred from long-stay hospitals to the community in each of the last seven years; and if he is satisfied that adequate community provision has been made for them.

Mrs. Currie: [*pursuant to her reply*, 22 October, columns *905-6*]: Mental handicap hospitals and units are not classified by the length of time residents stay. At 31 December 1985 there were 585 children aged under 16 years resident in National Health Service mental handicap hospitals and hospital units, and a further 293 children resident in small National Health Service mental handicap units in the community. The figures include children admitted for short-term care or assessment, and those who spend part of their time at home and part in a National Health Service unit. Separate figures are not available centrally for these categories of residents, nor are the numbers of children discharged from mental handicap hospitals into the community. However, the total number of discharges (including transfers) from mental handicap hospitals and units included in the DHSS booklets "Mental health Statistics for England" (copies in the Library) show that the great majority of these follow lengths of stay of less than six months, which could be for assessment, short-term treatment, or family respite care. Discharges after a longer stay may be for resettlement in the community, and these were as follows:—

Children aged under 16 discharged from National Health Service mental handicap hospitals, with duration of stay one year or more.

Year	*Number*
1979	166
1980	169
1981	139
1982	141
1983	135
1984	110
1985	122

Information is not available centrally about the nature of the provision made for children who have been transferred from large long-stay hospitals. Health authorities were asked to review the needs of children in their care jointly with local authorities to decide the best way to make more suitable provision. Authorities are aware of the importance of ensuring that services meet the whole range of needs of individual children wherever they are living and that parents are fully consulted.

When my noble Friend consulted the chairmen of regional health authorities in the spring about their plans for transferring the remaining long-stay children from large mental handicap hospitals to more appropriate alternatives, they reported a total of 330 still in hospital. Health authorities' plans are well advanced and, accordingly, we have asked them to ensure that by the end of 1988 no mentally handicapped child receiving long-term care should be required to live in a large mental handicap hospital.

We shall be following up progress in regional reviews and a further announcement will be made in due course. My noble Friend, who has been in correspondence with EXODUS, will be meeting representatives of organisations concerned with provision for mentally handicapped children, including EXODUS, a copy of the information paper for the meeting will be placed in the Library.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power Generation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate he has of the number of people directly and indirectly employed in nuclear power generation.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB and SSEB currently employ over 11,000 people directly for nuclear power generation. Both the UKAEA and BNFL also generate electricity from some of their nuclear plant, but given the nature of their respective operations it is not possible to give a precise figure for the numbers employed in the generation of electricity. Overall, the nuclear industry directly employs about 44,000 people. Many thousands more are employed on the industry's major capital projects, in maintaining and servicing the industry's existing sites and in providing local infrastructure. Well over 100,000 jobs depend directly or indirectly on the industry.

PRIME MINISTER

Bournemouth

Q79. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Prime Minister when she last visited Bournemouth in an offical capacity.

The Prime Minister: On Monday 6 October, when I visited the site of the new Bournemouth district general hospital.

Scotland (Oil-Related Activity)

Q86. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the current level of oil-related economic activity in Scotland.

The Prime Minister: The production of oil from the United Kingdom continental shelf is continuing at a broadly constant level. Daily average production expressed in million barrels per day was 2·692 during January 1986 and 2·508 during August 1986, with an average over the eight months of 2·525. The level of development and exploration of new fields is lower as a result of retrenchment by companies in reaction to low oil prices. This downturn in offshore activities has resulted in reduced demand for equipment, goods and services, particularly in the fabrication and supply companies, many of which are based in Scotland. Various proposals for fiscal and other measures have been put to the Government by the oil industry and others and these are being considered.

Engagements

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 November.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 November.

Mr. Yeo asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagments for Tuesday 4 November.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Reykjavik Summit

45. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations took place between his Department and the United States Administration concerning the arms control position adopted by the United States Government at Reykjavik.

Mr. Renton: In addition to the usual and continuous process of Alliance consultation, senior United States officials briefed the North Atlantic Council shortly before the Reykjavik meeting. Since then close consultation has continued, including bilateral contacts, the meeting of the North Atlantic Council on 13 October with Secretary Shultz, and the nuclear planning group meeting on 21-22 October. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is visiting the United States on 15 November for discussions with President Reagan.

47. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with his European colleagues in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the proposals made at the Reykjavik summit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence met NATO Defence Ministers of the nuclear planning group at its meeting at Gleneagles on 21-22 October.

I also attended a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on 13 October, which discussed the Reykjavik outcome with Secretary Shultz.

Trident

46. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what prevailing international circumstances Her Majesty's Government would now consider Trident to be negotiable in arms control talks.

Mr. Renton: We have repeatedly stated that if the Soviet and United States strategic arsenals were to be very substantially reduced and if no significant changes had occurred in Soviet defensive capability we would want to review our position and consider how best we could contribute to arms control in the light of the reduced threat. That remains the position. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on 30 October, the independent nuclear deterrent is vital to our future defence.

Nuclear Missiles

48. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's position on developments towards British participation in any intermediate range nuclear force arms negotiations.

Mr. Renton: The Geneva nuclear and space talks are bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union. There is no question of British participation.

49. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government still support the zero-zero option for intermediate range nuclear forces in Europe.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's position on the intermediate range nuclear forces negotiations with particular reference to the United States negotiating line at the Reykjavik summit.

Mr. Renton: The Alliance has consistently made clear its criteria for an acceptable INF agreement. These include the need for equal and global limits, appropriate constraints on shorter range INF and effective verification.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have been involved, or infend to become involved, in any discussions with the United States Administration concerning the reinterpretation or otherwise of the ABM treaty in relation to the SDI programme; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Renton: We are not a party to the ABM treaty, although we have discussed ABM treaty issues with the United States Administration and will continue to do so as appropriate.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, following the Government's support for the United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for demilitarisation in the south Atlantic, he plans to reduce the British military presence in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Renton: Our support for the United Nations resolution declaring a zone of peace and co-operation in the south Atlantic area reflects our desire to work for the reduction of tension in the region. As we made clear at the United Nations, we do not regard the new zone as affecting basic rights under the United Nations charter, which include that of self-defence.

Force levels in the Falklands reflect the continuing need for a military presence sufficient to deter aggression and to defend the islands against attack.

Baha'i Community (Iran)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent action he and his Community colleagues have taken on behalf of the Baha'i community in Iran.

Mr. Renton: As Presidency of the European Community we were instrumental in presenting a demarche to the Iranian Government on 26 August expressing our concern at the treatment of minority groups in Iran, and in particular the continued persecution of members of the Baha'i sect.

At the United Nations General Assembly this autumn we shall again make clear that we look to the Government of Iran to respect the human rights standards set out in the international instruments to which they are party.

"Living Conditions in OECD Countries"

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has yet

updated table 7·5 bis on pages 76 and 77 of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Social Policy Studies No. 3: "Living Conditions in OECD Countries."

Mrs. Chalker: No. The OECD has no plans to update this particular table. But information on OECD unemployment is contained in the "Employment Outlook" and statistical background published by the OECD each September.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the role of the Heung Yee Kuk in the New Territories, Hong Kong, after 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: There is no specific provision in the Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong concerning the future of the Heung Yee Kuk after 1997. This is essentially a matter for the Government of the future Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the reports of the UMELCO of Hong Kong visits to North America, Europe and Japan to study nuclear power projects.

Mr. Renton: A copy will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of the Hong Kong Government on the Daya Bay nuclear power plant.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government's policy towards the Daya Bay nuclear power plant has been set out in the speeches given by the Financial Secretary in the Legislative Council of Hong Kong on 16 July and 15 October 1986. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for a referendum to be held on the proposed nuclear power plant at Daya Bay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. We do not believe this would be appropriate. The proposed nuclear power station is to be located in the People's Republic of China.

Nepal

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with Nepal.

Mr. Renton: Relations between Britain and Nepal have traditionally been close and friendly; they continue to be so.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government of Nepal have made any representations concerning the dismissal of the soldiers of the Gurkha Regiment based in Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: The Government of Nepal have made no such representations. We informed them at an early stage and have remained in close contact.

British Council

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what annual savings will result from the closure of the British Council's offices in Damascus; and whether the money saved will be retained for the use of the British Council.

Mr. Renton: The maximum annual gross saving that may eventually result from closing the British Council office in Damascus is of the order of £0·4 million. However, in 1986-87 there will be no savings and funds may be needed in 1987-88 to cover residual costs.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government intend to cover the cost of increased security for the British Council; what estimate he has received from the British Council of such costs; how much money he proposes to make available for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: In 1986-87 the council asked for £820,000 additional to its voted provision for the year to cover the cost of increased security. Parliamentary approval will be sought to provide a substantial proportion of this money. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has in principle accepted the council's case for enhanced security in the years 1987-88 to 1989-90 but the results of the public expenditure survey cannot be anticipated. Further details will be published in the public expenditure White Paper and in the Supply Estimates to be submitted for parliamentary approval.

India

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action he intends to take following the Government of India's refusal to grant visas to the two British drugs liaison officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We have been promised a definitive response from the Indian Government in the very near future on whether the drug liaison officers can take up their posts.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a White Paper concerning the policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning fisheries in the Falklands including details of the negotiations conducted under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the statement my right hon. and learned Friend made to the House on 29 October, at columns 323-33, in which he made clear our policy and drew attention to our support for a study by the Food and Agriculture Organisation on fish stocks in the south-west Atlantic.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Tubero v. Toomey

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General what has been the result of the investigation into allegations

made by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) regarding the case of Tubero v. Toomey and others.

The Attorney-General: I apologise for the length of this answer.

On 19 December last the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) made in this House serious allegations against the senior master of the Supreme Court Mr. J. R. Bickford Smith, TD concerning his handling of two interlocutory applications in the Queen's Bench division in two separate actions between the same parties. The hon. Member had given no previous notice of his allegations, and it is understood that the rule of the House forbidding adverse references to the higher judiciary except on substantive resolution does not apply to masters of the Supreme Court. Later the hon. Member wrote to the Lord Chancellor enclosing a report from the solicitors acting for the plaintiffs in the proceedings. The Lord Chancellor has made extensive inquiries about these allegations, involving the solicitors for the defendants and counsel representing both parties in the proceedings as well as the senior master himself and Sir Neil Lawson, who heard the appeal in chambers on the first summons.

Both sets of proceedings arose from a claim by a Mr. Tubero and an associated company ("the plaintiffs") against the thousands of members of over 40 syndicates at Lloyd's, of whom only three were named as representing the rest. One of the defendants, but not one of those named, was a Mr. John Bickford-Smith who was a member of at least one of these syndicates. (I refer to the defendants collectively as "the defendants" and to Mr. Bickford-Smith as "Mr. Bickford-Smith the underwriter").

The claim arose from a contract of insurance against theft by the defendants in connection with the plaintiffs' jewellery business in Los Angeles. The claim was based on an allegation that the plaintiffs had suffered loss from a theft of jewellery at their Los Angeles premises on 4 August 1981.

Origially the claim was pursued against the dependents in the United States district court of South Florida. The defendants (then sued as "Lloyd's of London") disputed the claim on a number of grounds, including a denial that the alleged theft had taken place. On 17 May 1984 and 24 September 1984 the plaintiffs lost in interlocutory proceedings in their proceedings in the district court. The plaintiffs themsleves have never pursued these proceedings further since by an order dated 23 May 1985 the European American Bank were substituted as plaintiffs. Subsequently the plaintffs started separate proceedings in the state courts of Florida and New York. Those in the state court of Florida were dismissed as "duplicitous". It has not been ascertained exactly what became of the New York proceedings. On 1 August 1984 the plaintiffs commenced the first set of English proceedings in the Queen's Bench division of the High Court in London, by writ No. 1904 M 2943. These proceedings were founded on the same cause of action as those in the Florida district court. On 28 November 1984 the defendants issued a summons to dismiss these proceedings as an abuse of the process of the court. This was heard by the senior master on 13 December 1984. He allowed the summons and dismissed the action. The plaintiffs subsequently appealed but on 25 March 1985 the appeal was dismissed by Sir Neil Lawson sitting as judge in chambers. In a letter to the Lord Chancellor enclosing a note of his ex tempore judgment, Sir Neil Lawson describes the case as the

"clearest possible case of abuse of the process".

The allegations concerning the first English proceedings

In his remarks to the House of 19 December 1985 the hon. Member alleged that in relation to the hearing in December 1984 the senior master had "grabbed" the case and insisted that he should deal with it. There is no truth whatever in this allegation. The case had originally been assigned to Master Turner, but in accordance with everyday practice in the Queen's Bench division, the defendants requested the masters' secretary to arrange for the senior master to take the case in view of his knowledge of United States law and procedure.

The hon. Member also suggested that the senior master had an interest in the case which he failed to disclose. There is no truth whatever in this. The senior master had no such interest. It appears, though accounts differ, that in one way or another counsel for the plaintiffs told the senior master that one of the defendants was a Mr. J. Bickford-Smith, but it does not appear that this was by way of obj tion but to avoid any conceivable embarrassment, . nce the senior master's initials are "J.R." and his name Bickford Smith though not hypenated is also identical. The senior master has a clear recollection to the effect that he explained that the underwriter was probably a cousin of his.

That the point was not seriously pursued before the senior master is clear not only from the recollections of counsel but also from the fact that it was not raised again in the proceedings.

The relationship allegation

In the course of his speech on 18 December the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch said

"I have had a genealogist check the position and I can report that the grandfather of both of them—

that is both the senior master and Mr. Bickford-Smith the underwriter—

"was George Smith"

This would have made them first cousins and if true it would have been at best a serious reflection on the judgment of the senior master if (which did not happen) either party had objected to his taking the case and he had insisted on hearing it. But it is not true. Whilst it is not suggested that the hon. Member wilfully misled the House, the information of the genealogist disclosed by the hon. Member shows a very different situation.

It is true that the two Bickford-Smiths had a common ancester in one George Smith. He was not the grandfather of either and therefore they are not first cousins. He was the great great grandfather of Mr. Bickford-Smith the underwriter and the great grandfather of the senior master. The two men are thus second cousins once removed. That Mr. Bickford-Smith the underwriter, one of at least 15,000-odd defendants, had a minute interest in the proceedings is undeniable but can hardly be held to justify the intemperate criticism to which the senior master was subjected by the hon. Member. When these facts were brought to the hon. Member's notice in case he wished to make a personal statement to the House, he attributed his error to a "slip". Since the correct genealogy was apparently in his possession at the time, it may be thought to be rather worse than that.

The allegation that the senior master lied

The hon. Member also said:

"Master Bickford Smith lied to counsel. Yes, he lied. He said: 'You will not find another master in this corridor, nor a single judge in this building, who is not a Lloyd's underwriter.'"

The attribution of this remark to the senior master rests solely on the evidence of the solicitor appearing for the plaintiffs. It appears to be wholly incorrect as well as irrelevant and is in fact nonsensical. The senior master emphatically denies that he made this statement, and the solicitor's recollection is challenged by every counsel in the case, including the plaintiffs' own counsel. In fact it was clearly not made. The senior master is himself not an underwriter and would therefore be a living disproof of the assertion. The hon. Member was unable to provide any supporting evidence for this allegation except the solicitor in question. The alleged "lie" was never told. The allegation is clearly either fantasy or fabrication.

The allegation concerning the defendants' solicitors

The third allegation related to the defendants' Solicitors.

The hon. Member said:

"Further, what is happening in this case when of the solicitors, Elborne Mitchell, Elborne is a member of Lloyd's council, is a consultant in the case and is also a defendant in the case".—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1985; Vol. 89, c. 464-65.]

Again this is incorrect. Mr. Elbone was not a consultant in the case. At no stage did Mr. Elborne deal with the proceedings. Messrs. Elborne Mitchell and Co. were indeed the defendants' solicitors on the record, but the proceedings were dealt with by another partner.

The plaintiffs, who had lost their case before the senior master and had their action dismissed as an abuse of the process of the court, appealed to Sir Neil Lawson. Neither the notice of appeal nor anything said at the hearing of the appeal bears any trace of the matters complained of by the hon. Member, and though Sir Neil Lawson gave leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal the plaintiffs made no attempt to do so.

The second set of English proceedings

Instead of making use of the leave to appeal granted them on 4 April 1985 the plaintiffs proceeded to issue a second writ against the defendants (serial number 1985 M1458). Their cause of action was different from that in the first English proceedings and inconsistent with it. This second writ seems to have contained a claim that on 19 March 1985 (about a week before the hearing by Sir Neil Lawson on 25 March) an agreement in writing by way of accord and satisfaction had been made between the two firms of solicitors settling the plaintiffs claim for $US 2 million. It is difficult to see how this could ever have matched with the plaintiffs' conduct a week later in prosecuting their appeal before Sir Neil Lawson in the first proceedings which as stated above was in respect of the original loss and not on the alleged agreement.

The second writ was also the subject of an application to dismiss or strike out the claim as an abuse of the process of the court. On 11 June 1985 the senior master ordered all previous proceedings to be struck out and for technical reasons a fresh statement of claim to be delivered. The plaintiffs were ordered to pay £300 in costs. In spite of the adverse order by the senior master the plaintiffs complied with it and did not appeal. Nor did they raise at the hearing any contention as to the suitability of the senior master to deal with the summons. It seems inconceivable that they should have acted in this manner had there been any substance in any of the serious allegations made against the senior master.

The revised statement of claim delivered as the result of the hearing on 11 June 1985 was met by a further application by the defendants to dismiss the second English proceedings as an abuse of the process of the court. This case came before the senior master on 9 and 17 October 1985. In the event the plaintiffs again lost. The senior master dismissed the action, which then permanently disappeared. Again no objection was made to the senior master taking the summons. Again the judgment was not appealed. The senior master concluded that the proceedings disclosed a "crude attempt" by the solicitors to the plaintiffs to obtain by trick wording money for their clients to which they knew they were not entitled at the expense of a United States bank to which the plaintiffs (or one of them) was or were indebted and of the underwriters, and the senior master expressed disapproval of the conduct of the plaintiffs' solicitors.

It is worth recording that the district judge in the United States district court had formed a similarly unflattering view of the plaintiffs and their advisers. Inter alia the district judge said (23 May 1985):

"It is painfully obvious that the affidavit submitted by Tubero is false. It should also be noted that the officer who notarised the affidavit is Robert H. Anderson II, Tubero's counsel . . .

It is clear on the face of the record in the main action that there has been a total lack of good faith prosecution (sic) in the main action . . .

The actions of Tubero's Counsel, Robert H. Anderson II are among the most unprofessional that this Court has witnessed. His behaviour can only be described as a blight on the reputation of the general legal community. It is the undersigned's opinion that Anderson's actions herein raise serious questions regarding his fitness as a member of the legal profession".

Other matters

I turn to two other matters referred to by the hon. Member in his speech of 19 December. The first is the reference to freemasonary which appears to savour more of fantasy than fact. Contrary to what he has suggested Sir Neil Lawson is not a freemason, and, so far as can be ascertained, none of the counsel is a freemason.

The second other matter is a criticism of a letter as "pathetic" which it is alleged that the plaintiffs received from the Lord Chancellor's Office. This can only refer to one or both of two letters dated respectively 10 May 1985 and 4 September 1985 and written respectively 10 May 1985 and 4 September 1985 and written respectively to Mr. Tubero and to the American attorney Robert H. Anderson II (referred to above). In both of these the plaintiffs were properly advised that any objections to the hearing of a proceeding by a particular judge should be taken at the hearing in accordance with advice received.

Conclusion

The Lord Chancellor has looked into this case closely and can find no foundation whatever for the allegations which the hon. Gentleman has made against the senior master. Nor is there any evidence that Sir Neil Lawson, of the members of the Bar concerned in the case, or the defendants' solicitors, failed to deal with the matters before them on their merits, or that there was anything improper in their approach. The hon. Member cites a theory of some masonic conspiracy in support of his allegations. There is no basis for such a theory. So far as is known to the Lord Chancellor freemasonry is a perfectly

lawful organisation and in any case, apart from the senior master, none of the persons involved in the proceedings appear to be freemasons. In particular, Sir Neil Lawson who disposed on appeal of the first proceedings is not. Though this has not influenced him in any way, the Lord Chancellor has asked me to say that he personally is not, nor has he never been, a freemason, but that he is a name at Lloyd's though not a member of any of the syndicates involved in the proceedings.

I regard it as most unfortunate that such serious and damaging remarks of this kind, which on investigation are apparently without any foundation whatever, should have been made in the House about a member of the judiciary. There is a well understood rule in the House that senior judges may not be attacked in debate save on a substantive motion. Whether or not a similar rule should apply to other judges and if so of which grades could only be decided by the House itself. But it may at least be thought that to make allegations of this kind under cover of parliamentary privilege in the middle of the night without prior notice to the Minister charged with replying, if not a misuse by the hon. Member of his rights, is at least contrary to the elementary rules of natural justice and fair play.

Lord Chancellor's Department (Running Costs)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General what change is proposed for the 1986-87 running costs limit for the Lord Chancellor's Department.

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate the gross running costs limit for the Lord Chancellor's Department will be increased by £2,000,000 from £190,919,000 to £192,919,000. The increase is required for additional manpower to staff new courtrooms for the Crown court and to deal with increasing criminal and civil business. The extra costs will be offset by additional fee income and therefore there is no net change in public expenditure.

Land Registry (Running Costs)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General what change is proposed for the 1986-87 running costs limit for the Land Registry.

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the running costs limit for the Land Registry will be increased by £1,835,000 from £82,840,000 to £84,675,000. Almost all the increase is required for temporary staff and overtime costs because the number of applications for registration in 1986-87 is now expected to reach 2,521,000, which exceeds the total originally anticipated, 2,292,000, by over 9 per cent. The increased running costs will be fully offset by the extra fee revenue that the greater workload will generate. No net additional public expenditure is therefore involved.

THE ARTS

Cleveland County Museums Service

Mr. Tinn asked the Minister for the Arts if he has made arrangements for an exhibition relating to the Cleveland County Museums Service's International Drawing Biennale to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Luce: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall between 15 and 19 December 1986.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Exchange Controls

Mr. Galley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the new employment generated in the United Kingdom as a result of outward investment since the abolition of exchange controls.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxation

Mr. Hanley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in the consolidation of the Income and Corporaton Taxes Act 1970 and the subsequent Finance Acts, and when he expects to publish a consolidated Bill.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On present plans, it is hoped to introduced a Bill consolidating the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 and subsequent legislation early in the 1987-88 Session of Parliament.

Betting

Mr. Charles Morrison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the revenue from *(a)* off-course betting duty and *(b)* on-course betting duty for 1985-86; and what was the change from the previous year;

(2) what information he has on the betting turnover *(a)* off-course and *(b)* on-course for 1985-86; and what was the change from the previous year;

(3) what information he has on the betting turnover *(a)* off-course and *(b)* on-course for the six months, 5 April 1986 to 5 October 1986; and what was the change from the corresponding period for the previous year;

(4) what was the revenue from *(a)* off-course betting duty and *(b)* on-course betting duty for the six months 5 April 1986 to 5 October 1986; and what was the change from the corresponding period the previous year.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Income

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will detail the total of personal income going to the top 1 per cent., 2 per cent., 3 per cent., 4 per cent., and 5 per cent., respectively, before and after tax of each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 October 1986, c. *268*]: Information is given in the tables. The quantile groups have been determined by reference to the

distribution of income before tax (table 1) or after tax (table 2) of those single people and married couples for whom the Inland Revenue has records in each year. The figures are based on surveys of personal incomes.

Table 1: Income before tax

£ billion (percentage shares)

Quantile group of tax units[1]	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Top 1 per cent.	5·3	6·5	7·8	8·6	9·7	10·3	10·9
	(5·1)	(5·3)	(5·5)	(5·7)	(5·9)	(5·8)	(5·7)
Top 2 per cent.	8·4	10·3	12·2	13·5	15·2	16·2	17·9
	(8·1)	(8·4)	(8·6)	(8·9)	(9·2)	(9·1)	(9·4)
Top 3 per cent.	11·1	13·5	16·0	17·8	19·8	21·3	23·4
	(10·6)	(11·0)	(11·3)	(11·8)	(11·9)	(12·0)	(12·2)
Top 4 per cent.	13·5	16·5	19·4	21·6	23·9	25·9	28·4
	(12·9)	(13·4)	(13·8)	(14·2)	(14·4)	(14·5)	(14·8)
Top 5 per cent.	15·7	19·2	22·6	25·1	27·7	30·1	33·0
	(15·0)	(15·6)	(16·0)	(16·5)	(16·7)	(16·9)	(17·2)

[1]ie counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.

Table 2: Income after tax

£ billion (percentage shares)

Quantile group of tax units[1]	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Top 1 per cent.	3·1	4·2	4·9	5·3	6·0	6·4	7·2
	(3·6)	(4·2)	(4·3)	(4·4)	(4·5)	(4·5)	(4·6)
Top 2 per cent.	5·3	7·0	8·1	8·8	9·9	10·6	11·9
	(6·3)	(6·9)	(7·1)	(7·3)	(7·4)	(7·5)	(7·7)
Top 3 per cent.	7·3	9·5	11·0	11·9	13·3	14·4	16·0
	(8·7)	(9·4)	(9·6)	(9·8)	(10·0)	(10·1)	(10·4)
Top 4 per cent.	9·1	11·8	13·7	14·8	16·5	17·9	19·8
	(10·8)	(11·6)	(11·9)	(12·2)	(12·4)	(12·5)	(12·8)
Top 5 per cent.	10·9	13·9	16·1	17·5	19·4	21·1	23·3
	(12·9)	(13·8)	(14·1)	(14·4)	(14·6)	(14·8)	(15·1)

[1]ie counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.

Privatisation

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what selection procedure is used to obtain legal and financial advice from sources outside Her Majesty's Government in connection with privatisation proposals.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 November 1986]: The usual practice is that appointments by Departments of financial and legal advisers on privatisation are made following competitions.

WALES

Drug Addiction

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of beds in each hospital in Wales allocated specifically for the treatment of drug addiction.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available centrally.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of registered drug addicts in each health authority in Wales for each of the past five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The numbers of new and former narcotic drug addicts notified to the Home Office are published annually. A copy of the Home Office's publication "Statistics on the Misuse of Drugs United Kingdom: Supplementary Tables 1984", which contains data for the most recent five years, is in the Library. Information relates to police force area and is not available by district health authority.

British Iron and Steel Federation Houses

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the sums of money that his Department has allocated for the refurbishment of the British Iron and Steel Federation houses that are privately owned in Wales during each of the past five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Allocations have not been made for this purpose. A recent report by the Building Research Establishment found that the majority of BISF houses are structurally sound.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the sums of money allocated by his Department to each local authority in Wales for the improvement of council-owned British Iron and Steel Federation houses during each of the past five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No specific allocations have been made for this purpose. Local authorities are free to decide their own expenditure priorities within the total allocations made available to them.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has any plans to make grants available for the removal of asbestos in privately owned British Iron and Steel Federation houses.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Asbestos is generally present in BISF homes only as a small proportion of the composition of the roof material. These roofs are not considered to constitute a hazard and there are no plans for specific grants to be made available.

AIDS

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if any persons in Wales have received transfused blood contaminated with the acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Since 14 October 1985 the National Blood Transfusion Service has screened all blood donations for antibody to the AIDS virus.

No cases of patients receiving transfusions of contaminated blood have been reported in Wales.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each year since the introduction of the regional development grant, the percentage of the working population of Wales residing in assisted areas qualifying for that grant.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The regional development grant system introduced in 1972 was replaced by a new system introduced in November 1984, based on a combination of regional development grants and regional selective assistance. The proportion of the economically active population of Wales residing in assisted areas qualifying for that grant has been as follows during the period:

	Per cent.
Before August 1982	100
August 1982 to November 1984	93
Post November 1984	38

In addition to regional development grants, projects undertaken in Development Areas may be eligible for regional selective assistance. Regional selective assistance, which, dependant upon circumstances, can be very attractive, is also available in intermediate areas. A further 51 per cent. of the economically active population of Wales resides in Intermediate Areas as now defined, and 89 per cent. reside in areas qualifying for assistance under one or other heads.

Alcohol

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has undertaken any studies to assess the number of working days lost in Wales annually as a result of alcohol consumption.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No. However, a study into the health, social and economic costs of alcohol misuse in England and Wales has been funded from the DHSS/ Welsh Office research and development budget. (cf McDonnell, R; Maynard, A (1985) "The Costs of Alcohol Misuse", British Journal of Addiction, 80, 27-35, a copy of which is in the Library).

Garden Festival

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to announce his decision on the site of the 1992 garden festival before 30 November.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am giving very careful consideration to the four short-listed bids and hope to announce my decision soon—whether before or after 30 November I cannot yet say.

Mentally-ill People (Consultative Paper)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he proposes to issue his consultative paper on the mentally ill in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The consultation paper will address a range of complex issues and will be published as soon as work on them has been completed.

Perinatal Mortality (Report)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he intends to publish the perinatal mortality report.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The report is in the course of final preparation and will be published as soon as is practicable.

Morriston Hospital, Swansea

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the plastic and burns unit will be established at Morriston hospital, Swansea.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The transfer to Morriston hospital is presently expected to take place in 1992.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Small Farmers

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many small farmers there are in England; and what percentage this is of the total of registered agricultural holdings.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Some 39,000 holdings are usually classified as small, about 26 per cent. of the total.

Meat Inspection

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria he used in fixing the increase in meat inspection charges at 65 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government have made no such increase in charges. The European Commission has published proposals for minimum levels of charges for health inspections in slaughterhouses engaged in intra-Community trade. As has been explained to representatives of the meat trade, we consider the proposed minimum levels to be excessive and we will be seeking changes to the proposals.

Swine Fever

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the outbreaks of swine fever during 1986, including details of the number of cases identified, the number of pigs

slaughtered and the reasons why Her Majesty's Government did not impose a ban on imports during the period of the outbreak.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Ten outbreaks of classical swine fever were confirmed between 10 April and 25 June this year. 7,820 pigs were slaughtered. The action taken by the Government ensured that the outbreaks were quickly stamped out.

There were two reasons why the European Community provisions for restricting imports could not be invoked on this occasion. The disease situation in the countries from which we import pigmeat products was not worsening. Also, though there was strong circumstantial evidence to link the outbreaks with feeding of waste scraps from imported pigmeat products, there is no proof that these came from any particular country. A ban on imports would therefore have been legally unsound.

Herring (Irish Sea)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has opposed, at the European Economic Community Council of Ministers, the Commission's proposal that herring spawning grounds in the north Irish Sea should remain open until 21 September each year; and if he will make a statement on this decision of the Council of Ministers to reject the Commission's proposal and instead to close the grounds from 1 September.

Mr. Gummer: Fishing for herring is prohibited in two areas of the North Irish sea to protect the spawning grounds. When the closures for 1986 were proposed, the United Kingdom requested a starting date of 1 September in order to safeguard the traditional drift net fishery on the Mourne spawning grounds. Subsequently, at the request of the Northern Irish fishing industry, we asked the Commission to put forward a proposal to amend the starting date for the closure of the Douglas bank spawning grounds to allow this area to remain open until 21 September. The Commission was unwilling to put such a proposal forward for 1986, but I am hopeful that it will do so in its proposals for the quota arrangements for 1987.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the value of grain held currently in intervention stocks in the United Kingdom; how many companies are holding such stock; and what monitoring there is to ensure that there is no misappropriation of the stock.

Mr. Gummer: Based on the buying-in price then current, the value of United Kingdom stocks of intervention grain on 17 October 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, was £520 million, of which grain to the value of £479 million was held in commercial stores by 90 companies, the balance in Government-owned stores. The quality and quantity of the stock is monitored by regular visits by the board's agents, the Home Grown Cereals Authority, and by an annual volumetric stocktaking.

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on how many occasions companies involved in holding intervention stocks of agricultural produce have been found to be in financial difficulties; how many have gone into liquidation or are threatened with it; and if he will name the companies involved and state in each case the action taken by officials to safeguard public money and the amount of public money that has been or is likely to be lost as a result of the liquidations that have taken or are likely to take place;

(2) if he will make a statement on the extent of public involvement with the company Trent Grain which holds intervention stocks of agricultural produce, stating *(a)* whether any public money is likely to be lost, *(b)* whether there is evidence of any stock loss, *(c)* when officials first appreciated the nature of the firm's problems, *(d)* what action was subsequently taken to limit the extent of possible public financial loss and *(e)* whether officials studied the company reports of the last three years.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the financial monitoring arrangements of companies holding intervention stocks of agricultural produce; how frequent and of what nature are the contacts; what financial information is requested; and at what level responsibility is taken for ensuring that all such companies being paid public money are financially stable.

Mr. Gummer: The Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce makes use of the services of a private business reporting agency in monitoring the financial status of companies offering storage facilities. The board's professional accountants provide advice on the reports received which vary both in content and frequency according to circumstances.

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many firms hold intervention stocks of agricultural produce; where they are located; what is the total annual amount paid to such companies; and what is the average amount.

Mr. Gummer: On 30 September 1986, the latest date for which details are available, 249 companies held United Kingdom intervention stocks at the locations listed. The Intervention Board's 1986-87 Supply Estimate contains provision for about £110 million for payments to commercial storekeepers for the handling and storage of intervention produce, an average of £442,000 per company.

Aberdeen
Abingdon
Ahoghill
Airdrie
Alford
Ancaster
Annalong
Antrim
Arbroath
Augher
Avonmouth
Aylesford
Ballymena
Banbridge
Banbury
Bardney
Basildon
Belfast
Belford
Bellshill
Bicester
Billingham
Bishop's Stortford
Blackburn
Bloxwich
Bristol
Boroughbridge
Bourne
Boston
Braintree
Bridge of Allan
Bridgwater
Bressingham
Bury St. Edmunds
Buxton
Calne
Camborne
Cannock
Cardiff
Chipping Warden
Chard
Chester
Christchurch
Cleveland
Clopston
Cockermouth

Coleraine
Colnbrook
Colsterworth
Corby
Coventry
Craigavon
Crymych
Cullhampton
Cumbernauld
Dagenham
Dalcross
Darlington
Downham Market
Driffield
Droitwich
Drumlithie
Dudley
Dungannon
Duns
Dysart
Earls Colne
Eastleigh
Edinburgh
Ely
Elsworth
Evanton
Exeter
Eye
Fakenham
Fearne
Felixstowe
Fleetwood
Finmere
Ford
Foulsham
Fraserburgh
Frome
Fulbourn
Gainsborough
Gateshead
Gillingham
Glasgow
Glenrothes
Gloucester
Grantham
Granton
Grateley
Grimsby
Hadleigh
Hadstock
Halesworth
Halstead
Hardingstone
Haresfield
Hartlebury
Hayes
Heighington
Hemswell
Hereford
Heywood
Hillsborough
Hotton-le-Clay
Honeyborne
Horncastle
Hoveringham
Hull
Huntingdon
Immingham
Ingham
Inverness
Ipswich
Keith
Kings Lynn
Kingswinford
Kirkcaldy
Kirknewton
Kirton Lindsey
Lampeter
Leeds
Leek
Leicester
Leith
Leven
Lincoln
Linton
Lisburn
Little Saxham
Liverpool
Llandysul
Llanelli
Locharbriggs
London
Londonderry
Long Eaton
Lostwithiel
Lowestoft
Lurgan
Luton
Lutterworth
Lympne
Magherafelt
Maidstone
Maldon
Manby
Manchester
March
Market Drayton
Market Harborough
Market Rasen
Melmerby
Membury
Milford Haven
Milton Keynes
Minworth
Misson
Mistley
Monmouth
Newport
Newry
Newton Abbey
Newton Abbot
Newbury
Newcastle
Newmachar
Newmarket
Normanton
Northallerton
North Shields
Norwich
Nuneaton
Oldbury
Omagh
Ormiston
Oswestry
Owmby
Paddock Wood
Pebmarsh
Penrith
Penicuik
Peterborough
Peterhead
Pickerham
Pinhoe
Pockington
Plymouth
Pontefract
Portadown
Prees Heath
Preston
Quarrington
Rackheath
Raydon
Reading
Redcar
Retford
Rhyl
Ringwood
Rochdale
Roydon
Royston
St. Clears
St. Helens
St. Ives
Salisbury
Scunthorpe
Sevenoaks
Sheffield
Sherborne
Shrewsbury
Skegness
Sleaford
Sherpness
Snetterton
Soham
Southampton
South Wigston
Staughton
Stoke Ferry
Stourport
Stourmarket
Strabane
Stracathro
Stockton on Tees
Stonehouse
Stretham
Stroud
Sudbury
Swaffham
Swansea
Swinderby
Swindon
Tadcaster
Tamworth
Tangmere
Taunton
Telford
Thetford
Tewkesbury
Torrington
Towcester
Tranent
Turiff
Truro
Tuxford
Ulcaby
Uttoxeter
Walsall
Walsingham
Warrington
Warwick
Watford
Wednesbury
Wellingborough
Wellington
Wells
Westbury
West Bromwich
West Hallam
West Wratting
Whitchurch
Whittlesford
Whittlesey
Whitland
Wigan
Wigston
Wimblington
Wingham
Wisbech
Witham
Witney
Wolverhampton
Woodbridge
Wroughton
Wymeswold
Yeovil
York

Meat (Chemical Treatment)

Mr. Williams asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review his decision not to ban the process of tenderising beef by injection into the jugular vein while the animal is still alive, under constraint in a crush while its head is pulled up.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The proposal to permit tenderisers formed part of our response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on the slaughter of red meat animals. Our response was issued to interested organisations for comment and we are reviewing our proposals in the light of representations received.

Mr. Williams asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will bring in regulations to enable the consumer to specifically identify meat that has been tenderised by the process of injection of enzymes before the animal was slaughtered;

(2) if he envisages any action to enable consumers to identify meat which has been tenderised by the injection of enzymes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Food Labelling Regulations 1984 already require the name used for any meat which has been treated with proteolytic enzymes or which is derived from an animal that has been so treated shall include or be accompanied by the word "tenderised".

Mr. Williams asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any research is currently sponsored by his Department to complete the work which had been undertaken until spring 1986 at the Institute of Animal

Research at Newbury into the development of more sensitive tests capable of picking up low residual levels of hormones and antibiotics in carcasses after slaughter.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Research is currently in progress at the Ministry's central veterinary laboratory, Weybridge, on the development and improvement of analytical methods capable of detecting low residual levels of hormones and antibiotics in tissues and body fluids of slaughtered animals.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what forestry development is currently proceeding or is in process of preparation within environmentally sensitive areas; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what drainage projects are planned or proceeding on wetland of ecological or environmental attraction within environmentally sensitive areas;

(3) what current developments are taking place within environmentally sensitive areas which he assesses are likely to be injurious to the present character of such areas; and which of these projects are supported by grants from public funds.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to refuse to make grants towards land drainage or commercial forestry operations within environmentally sensitive areas where such development could be injurious to the quality of the area concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under existing arrangements, grants for new drainage or forestry work require prior written consent. That consent will be given in environmentally sensitive areas only to developments which are compatible with the environmental features of the area concerned.

Wild Mink

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) at what rate it is estimated that wild mink are increasing in the United Kingdom;

(2) what representations he has received about wild mink in British waterways;

(3) what action he intends to take to reduce the numbers of wild mink;

(4) what reports of damage caused by wild mink he has received over the past three years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Mink are now well established in the wild in England and Wales, but my Department has no reliable scientific data on the numbers of mink involved, and comprehensive information about the damage caused is not readily available.

Although not a significant agricultural pest, mink are predators of wildfowl, poultry, fisheries and game and in some cases they may cause damage to certain individual enterprises. The Ministry provides specialist advice to anyone experiencing damage and traps are at present loaned free of charge. Responsibility for control of pests none the less rests with the occupier of land.

I am not aware of any recent representations about wild mink in British waterways.

Management Information Systems

Mr. Thurnham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is now able to make available the 1986 returns of his top management information systems.

Mr. Jopling: I am pleased to say that a copy of the 1986 MINIM returns, which cover the objectives and resources used by the Ministry's programmes, has been placed today in the Library of the House.

Fishing Fleet (Decommissioning Scheme)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much cod, haddock, saithe and whiting was caught and landed by vessels which are no longer active in the fleet by virtue of their having been decommissioned since the decommissioning scheme was introduced.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1986, c. *85*.]: Over 200 vessels have been decommissioned since the scheme was introduced. Details of the total catches by those vessels of the species listed are not readily available and cannot be obtained from the records held by MAFF and DAFS except at disproportionate cost.

DEFENCE

Warship Procurement

12. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement outlining his plans for the future of warship procurement over the next five years.

Mr. Younger: We intend to maintain a substantial warship procurement programme over the next five years, as we have done over the last seven.

Type 23 Frigates

13. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to attain the required ordering pattern of three type 23 frigates per year in order to preserve a proper age structure for a 50 surface ship fleet.

16. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his statement in July on the placement of orders for type 23 frigates 02, 03 and 04, he will now make a statement on the position in the ordering programme of frigates 05, 06 and 07.

Mr. Younger: Following the announcement I made earlier this year, there are now four of the new class of type 23 frigates on order. No decisions have yet been taken on the size or timing of further orders of follow-on type 23s, but these will, as always, be dependent upon the availability of resources.

Royal Naval Dockyards

14. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the privatisation of royal naval dockyards.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The timetable for the introduction of commercial management is being achieved. Six tenders have been submitted by companies bidding for the contract to manage the dockyards, and negotiations on the term

contract are now in progress. It is hoped to announce a successful contractor for each dockyard at the end of the year, and for that contractor to assume responsibility for the management of the dockyard on vesting day, 6 April 1987.

Fylingdales Early Warning System

15. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made towards modernisation of the Fylingdales early warning system.

Mr. Stanley: Since the statement I made on 22 May in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), a notice of proposed development has been submitted to the North Yorkshire Moors national parks committee and a memorandum of understanding concluded with the Government of the United States.

NATO Air Bases

17. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has made of the implications of removing United States air bases from Britain.

Mr. Stanley: As stated in the declaration of Alliance Heads of State and Government following the North Atlantic Council meeting in Bonn in 1982:

"The presence of North American armed forces in Europe and the United States strategic nuclear commitment to Europe remain integral to Allied security."

Reykjavik Summit

18. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of the proposals put forward at the Reykjavik summit.

21. **Mr. Woodall** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence implications of the Reykjavik mini-summit.

25. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of the Reykjavik summit discussions.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Members to the statement I made in the House on 23 October. The implications for our defence policy of the arms control process, including the Reykjavik talks, are being fully and continuously considered.

Holy Loch

19. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with the United States Government relating to the future of Holy Loch.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 23 October.

33. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place regarding the future of the United States submarine base on the Holy Loch.

41. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the future of the United States base in Holy Loch.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) earlier today.

NATO (Nuclear Planning Group)

20. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group's recent meeting at Gleneagles.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) on 23 October, at column *1293*.

27. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the meeting of the nuclear planning group at Gleneagles.

30. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group meeting at Gleneagles on 20-21 October.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Members to the answer which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

Strategic Defence Initiative

22. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of United Kingdom involvement in research and development related to the United States strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: So far SDI research awards to the United Kingdom amount to $17 million. Other prospects involving both Government research establishments and United Kingdom companies and research organisations are at advanced stages of negotiation, across a broad spectrum of research areas.

34. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has had discussions with the United States Secretary of Defence concerning the progress of the strategic defence initiative programme since 13 October.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend had a very useful discussion with Mr. Weinberger on a range of issues, including the SDI research programme, at the nuclear planning group meeting in Gleneagles on 21-22 October. The details are confidential.

42. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to discuss the strategic defence initiative with his United States counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I have no immediate plans to do so. However, the strategic defence initiative is a subject covered in the frequent contacts between Ministers and officials of the British and United States Governments. Most recently it was discussed during the ministerial meeting of NATO's nuclear planning group at Gleneagles on 21-22 October. A copy of the communiqué of that meeting has been placed in the Library.

RAF (Flying Hours Restriction)

23. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the restriction on flying hours in the Royal Air Force imposed when oil prices were high has been modified in the light of lower fuel costs.

Mr. Freeman: There has been no restriction on flying hours in the Royal Air Force since July 1985.

Intermediate Range Nuclear Missiles

24. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what talks he has held recently with the United States Government concerning cuts in intermediate range nuclear missiles.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend had discussions on intermediate range forces with the US Defence Secretary and other NATO Defence Ministers at the recent meeting of the NATO nuclear planning group. A copy of the communiqué issued at the end of that meeting is in the Library.

Service Residences (Malvern)

26. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the residences up for sale at Malvern are still empty and without offers to purchase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: All 22 of the Army's surplus married quarters at Wood Farm camp are empty. They have been passed to the Property Services Agency for disposal, and so far 17 have been advertised and offered to service men for sale under the armed forces discounted sales scheme. offers for 16 properties are being processed, and one property for which there is no bid will be sold on the open market by the Property Services Agency. The remaining five surplus quarters will be offered for sale shortly under the discounted sales scheme, and any not sold under the scheme will be sold on the open market.

RAF (Female Pilots)

28. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he plans to change present Royal Air Force policy so as to allow female members of the Royal Air Force to fly aeroplanes.

Mr. Freeman: Women have been eligible for some time to fly as air loadmasters in the RAF. Girls were also given the opportunity to fly following the 1985 reorganisation of the university air squadrons. We have no plans, however, to change our present policy and employ female members of the RAF as pilots or navigators.

Gruinard Island

29. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report on progress towards the decontamination of Gruinard Island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Treatment of the island was completed in August. Soil samples have been taken and are now being studied. The results of these studies will be considered by the Ministry of Defence and its independent advisory group before any decision is taken about the future of the island.

Defence Review

31. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for a defence review.

Mr. Younger: None.

Reykjavik Summit

32. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied that the defence of the United Kingdom would be fully safeguarded if the reductions in nuclear weapons proposed at the Reykjavik summit were all implemented.

Mr. Stanley: The Government fully endorse the bold attempt of the President of the United States to seek far-reaching arms control agreements with the Soviet Union. We have also made it clear that there is obviously a direct relation between major reductions in strategic nuclear forces and conventional forces and it is essential that the two are seen together. Such reductions must also go hand in hand with an improvement of East-West relations generally.

Royal Ordnance Factories

35. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the Royal Ordnance factories.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 24 October 1986, at column 967.

Combined Cadet Force

36. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plan to review his Department's funding of the Combined Cadet Force in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We are presently reviewing the organisation and funding of the Combined Cadet Force to see whether the current arrangements are the most efficient and effective to enable the aims and objectives of the force to be fully realised.

Trident

37. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the capability of Soviet defences to counter the Trident missile when it is deployed.

Mr. Stanley: No developments in Soviet anti-ballistic missile defences are currently foreseen which are likely to negate the deterrent effect of the Trident force within the lifetime of the system.

39. **Mr. Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the relative economics of Trident as the future nuclear deterrent option.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. Trident is the most cost-effective way of providing Britain with the necessary minimum deterrent after Polaris.

Nuclear Deterrent

38. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose of the nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the description of NATO strategy on pages 12-14 of volume I of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985".

Northern Ireland

40. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the role and operations of Her Majesty's Forces, including the Ulster Defence Regiment, in support of the civil power in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: The role of Her Majesty's forces in Northern Ireland is to provide support to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the fight against terrorism. Nine Regular battalions, one Royal Marine Commando and nine battalions of the Ulster Defence Regiment, together with

specialist support from other units, such as the Royal Engineers, are currently deployed in the Province. Elements of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force also make an important contribution.

Abbott Self-Propelled Gun

43. **Sir Patrick Wall** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the 105 mm Abbott Self-Propelled gun will be replaced in the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We expect to commence phasing out the 105 mm Abbott Self-Propelled gun around the end of this decade.

Missile Launchers

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will identify and quantify the number of missile launchers with a range of up to 200 km currently in Europe credited to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces that are *(a)* non-reloadable and *(b)* reloadable.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will identify and quantify the number of missile launchers with a range of up to 200 km currently credited to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation armed forces in the United States of America and Europe that are *(a)* non-reloadable and *(b)* reloadable.

Mr. Stanley: The "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" shows that there are 90 Lance missile launchers with a range of up to 200 km deployed with NATO forces in Europe. We also understand there are about 12 Lance missile launchers in the United States of America which could reinforce those in Europe. Lance missile launchers are reloadable.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will identify and quantify the number of missile launchers with a range of up to 200 kilometres currently in Europe credited to Warsaw Pact forces that are *(a)* non-reloadable and *(b)* reloadable.

Mr. Stanley: Launchers for nuclear missiles with a range of up to 200 km currently deployed with Warsaw Pact forces in Europe are Frog and SS21. The number deployed is shown in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (annex A, figure 15 under short range systems) as 700. All the launchers are reloadable.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether approval has been given for the construction of underground nuclear weapons storage vaults at Royal Air Force Lakenheath, Royal Air Force Upper Heyford and Royal Air Force Bentwaters.

Mr. Stanley: My Department is involved in continuing discussions with the US Government on possible storage facilities. No decisions have been taken.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by variant the number of *(a)* short range nuclear weapons with a range of up to 200 km and *(b)* medium range nuclear missiles with a range of between 200 km and 1000 km that have been removed from Europe as a result of the 27 October 1983 Montebello decision of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 October 1986, c. *262*.]: The withdrawals of the following categories of NATO nuclear weapons in Europe since the Montebello decision have been announced to date:

a. In the range up to 200 km, Atomic Demolition Munitions and Honest John missiles have been withdrawn entirely.

b. In the range between 200 km and 1000 km Pershing I missiles have been withdrawn partially

Hong Kong (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Hong Kong by the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley).

Mr. Stanley: I visited Hong Kong from 27 to 29 August 1986. The main purpose of my visit was to see and talk to personnel from all three services in the Hong Kong garrison, and to have discussions with the Commander British Forces and members of the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley), met members of the Gurkha Regiment on his recent visit to Hong Kong.

Mr. Stanley: Yes. I had the pleasure of visiting the 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles, the 1st and 2nd Battalions 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles, and the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, and I also met members of the Queen's Gurkha Signals and the Queen's Gurkha Engineers.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley), met representatives of the anti-nuclear lobby concerning the proposed construction of the Daya Bay nuclear power plant on his recent visit to Hong Kong.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Gurkha Regiment

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Gurkha Regiment are based in Hong Kong at the latest date.

Mr. Stanley: On 31 August there were about 5,000 Gurkhas stationed in Hong Kong, including trainees.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Gurkha soldiers served in Hong Kong since 1956 to 1986; and how many have been dismissed the service.

Mr. Stanley: Some 29,000 Gurkha soldiers have served in Hong Kong since 1956. Of these, a total of 156 men since 1980 have been dismissed or discharged on disciplinary grounds while serving in Hong Kong. This includes the 110 members of 1st/7th Gurkha Rifles discharged in August this year. Records kept prior to 1980 do not specify location at time of discharge.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Gurkha soldiers have been dismissed from Her Majesty's forces since 1956.

Mr. Stanley: Since 1956, 369 Gurkha soldiers have been dismissed or discharged on disciplinary grounds from Her Majesty's forces.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has of the number of people directly and indirectly employed in *(a)* maintaining the independent nuclear deterrent, *(b)* the servicing of United States bases in the United Kingdom and *(c)* the Trident programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is estimated that *(a)* 11,000 MOD civilians are directly employed in maintaining the independent nuclear deterrent, *(b)* United States bases and service men and their British employees provide about 30,000 direct and indirect jobs including those generated by the purchase of goods and services in the United Kingdom, *(c)* the Trident programme will create an average of 8,000 direct and 7,000 indirect job opportunities throughout its procurement period, rising to 15,000 and 12,000 in the peak years of the programme. The number of people indirectly employed in maintaining the independent nuclear deterrent is not known.

Nimrod

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the Nimrod AEW mission system avionics are now operating at an acceptable standard;

(2) what is his assessment of the present efficiency of the GEC avionics radar in the AEW Nimrod programme;

(3) if he is considering accepting the Nimrod AEW at a lower level of performance specification than originally required.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest available information of the current cost of the AEW Nimrod programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, some £930 million (VAT included) at current prices has been spent or committed on the Nimrod AEW project.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 5 November 1986

DEFENCE

Research and Development

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent by his Department during the last year for which figures are available, on research and development; and what proportion of that was spent in Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence plans to spend £398 million on research and £1,940 million on development in the present financial year. Full detail is given in table 3.2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" part II. Defence expenditure is not accounted for on a regional basis.

Schools of Music

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will be making his decision on the defence schools of music.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend expects to make a decision soon.

Regular Reserve

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence, for each of the last three years for which information is available and for the year to date how many personnel of the Regular reserve have been *(a)* called to Army reporting centres, *(b)* reported to Army reporting centres and *(c)* undertaken uniformed service of at least 48 hours duration.

Mr. Freeman: The number of Regular reservists involved in the activities listed for the current year and three preceding years is as follows:

(a) Called to annual reporting centres

	Number
1983-84	46,303
1984-85	41,478
1985-86	36,579
1986-87	Not available

(b) Reported to annual reporting centres

	Number	*per cent.*
1983-84	40,730	88
1984-85	35,911	87
1985-86	31,482	86
1986-87	Not available	

(c) Uniformed service (training) exceeding 48 hours

	Number
1983-84	Nil
1984-85	3,300
1985-86	2,300
1986-87	[1]2,000

[1] Total estimated 2,300.

Annual voluntary training for Regular reservists was first introduced in 1984-85: prior to this, only the annual reporting exercise was in force.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Charles Wardle asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to announce a decision on the introduction of ethnic monitoring for the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: We have decided to introduce ethnic monitoring at the recruitment stage for all formal applicants and new entrants to the armed forces. The target date for its introduction is 1 April 1987. Monitoring will be on the basis of self-classification, as is recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality, and will be at the point of application only. The information derived will be held in the strictest confidence and used solely to produce a profile of the ethnic composition of both those applying for service and those subsequently selected.

This decision was taken as a means of monitoring our success in attracting applications to join the armed forces from all racial groups and to provide an indication of the relative success rate in entry selection. As a means of re-emphasising our commitment to equal opportunities, we also intend to re-issue a Defence Council instruction which sets out the services' responsibilities under the Race Relations Act 1976, the means by which grievances of those serving can be investigated and the existence of administrative and disciplinary sanctions which would be imposed to counter any form of racial prejudice, and which emphasises the unacceptability of any form of racial prejudice within the armed forces. In addition, all service recruitment literature and advertisements will shortly declare that the services are equal opportunity employers under the terms of the Race Relations Act 1976. Written guidance is being issued to recruiting staffs on the need to avoid racial discrimination in recruitment to formalise existing policy.

All those who apply to join the armed forces and meet the necessary entry standards, will continue to be considered for available places regardless of colour, race or creed. Those who are successful will find that they are welcomed into the services.

Nimrod

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is considering accepting the Nimrod AEW at a lower level of performance specification than originally required.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986]: There has been no recent change to ASR 400, which is the baseline against which both the remaining contenders in this competition are being judged.

PRIME MINISTER

Poverty Trap

Mr. Hancock asked the Prime Minister if she will introduce changes in the tax and benefit systems to seek to remove many one-parent families with young children from the poverty trap.

The Prime Minister: Changes are already embodied in the Social Security Act 1986 which will benefit all low-paid workers with children, including single parents, who might be affected by the poverty trap. The calculation of family credit (a new benefit for working families replacing family income supplement) and housing benefit on a net rather than a gross income basis, will mean that workers will no longer find that higher earnings can leave them worse off because of reduced income-related benefits. The future of the additional personal (tax) allowance is considered in the Green Paper "The Reform of Personal Taxation" (Cmnd. 9756) and we are considering the responses to this process of consultation.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister (1) what the Secretary to the Cabinet understood to be the possible consequences of a failure to establish an official inquiry into the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter on the Westland affair, following his discussions with the Attorney-General in January 1986; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what discussions she had with the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks about the substance and details of her speech to the House on 27 January in relation to the Westland affair; and if she will make a statement;

(3) by what means and in what form she originally intended the letter of 6 January fom the Solicitor-General about the Westland affair to be brought into the public domain, prior to the leak of the letter on 6 January; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As was stated in paragraph 28 of the Government's response to the third and fourth reports of the Defence Committee, full accounts of the matters with which the fourth report was concerned have already been given by myself and other Ministers in statements in Parliament, speeches in debates and answers to parliamentary questions, and by the head of the Home Civil Service in his evidence to the Committee. The Government stand by those accounts, and see no reason to qualify or add to them.

Education (Financing)

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to the announcement by the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 30 October, she will now initiate discussions between relevant departments on the transfer of responsibility for financing state education from local education authorities to the central exchequer; if she will call for a full report to be prepared thereon; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I shall continue to seek all possible means for improving standards in education.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Uganda

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further aid he will give to Uganda in the form of medicines.

Mr. Chris Patten: Between 1981 and the end of this financial year we will have spent £200,000 on the transportation of medical supplies to Uganda. These have been provided by manufacturers at little or no cost. We are considering a request for continued support of this kind.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further aid he will give to Uganda in the form of Land Rovers for the police force.

Mr. Chris Patten: 26 Land Rovers for the Uganda police force, being provided under the British aid programme for Uganda, have been shipped in the past two weeks. A further 16 Land Rovers are due to be shipped before the end of November. Any request for further Land Rovers for the Uganda police force will be considered after the present vehicles have been in operation for a period.

Bophuthatswana

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 27 October, whether any of the projects for which aid has been made available have been situated in Bophuthatswana.

Mr. Chris Patten: None of the projects for which aid has been made available is in Bophuthatswana.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards supporting aid projects in Bophuthatswana.

Mr. Chris Patten: We do not recognise any of the so-called independent homelands and support no aid projects within Bophuthatswana.

TRANSPORT

M1 (Lighting)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many sections of the M1 motorway lighting systems are not working properly between London and Wakefield; who are the responsible authorities for maintenance; and what method of inspection is carried out by those responsible.

Mr. John Moore: All sections of the M1 motorway lighting generally give satisfactory performance notwithstanding minor defects which arise from time to time. There are several outstanding faults currently requiring urgent attention between Watford Gap service area and junction 16 in Northamptonshire. These cannot be repaired at present because of adjacent major road reconstruction works. They should be repaired during November 1986.

Between junctions 8 and 14 in Hertfordshire major maintenance of the central reservation is in progress. This work interferes with the lighting apparatus and opportunity is therefore being taken to renovate the lighting at the same time. As a result only every other lantern is lit, while the works are in progress. This may create the impression that the lighting is faulty in the sections affected.

As Secretary of State I am the highway authority for the M1 motorway and responsible for lighting maintenance on it. I appoint agents to act for me, who either undertake the work themselves, or employ contractors, as follows:

M1 section	Agent	Road lighting maintenance contractor
Greater London	London Borough of Barnet	T. Cartledge & Co.
Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire	Hertfordshire County Council	Eastern Electricity Board
Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire County Council	East Midlands Electricity Board
Leicestershire, Junction 21	Leicester County Council	Leicester County Council
Remainder of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire	Derbyshire County Council	East Midlands Electricity Board

Night-time visual inspections are carried out at intervals not exceeding 28 days.

Driving Test

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any plans to introduce motorway driving tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans to introduce motorway driving tests. The current driving test provides an adequate assessment of a candidate's basic driving skills. There is no evidence that newly qualified drivers are involved disproportionately in motorway accidents. Safety in general is much better for motorways than other roads.

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of applicants pass the official driving test on their first attempt.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not collected on a routine basis. Results of a driving test sample survey conducted in 1985 were that 45 per cent. of candidates passed their driving test on the first attempt.

A38 (Devon)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the building of crash barriers on the A38 in Devon.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to announce revised criteria for the provision of safety fences shortly.

I recently received a delegation from Devon county council about the need for additional fencing on the A38 and am considering the matter.

A30 (Sourton Cross and Launceston)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the final route for the A30 between Sourton Cross and Launceston.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's preferred route for the improvement of this stretch of the A30 remains as announced in July 1982. Whether this will be the final route depends on whether a public inquiry is needed, and, if so, on its outcome.

Parking

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents have been caused by indiscriminate parking on roads in each of the following years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans are being considered to help alleviate the dangers of indiscriminate parking by motorists.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The "Highway Code" sets out clearly motorists' responsibilities for parking sensibly and safely. Information and publicity campaigns remind them about particular dangers they may cause. Good practice is encouraged in a variety of ways, ranging from yellow lines to wheel clamps and fines. The most recent innovation is the extended fixed penalty system to ensure that fines are paid.

Drink-Driving Campaign

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the results of the spring and summer drink-driving campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The campaign was part of our long-term aim to make people more aware of the dangers of drinking and driving all through the year. Following the publicity, we have distributed 700,000 copies of our booklet "The Facts about Drinking and Driving". I shall follow up this increased public awareness by providing more factual information and a clear cut message "Don't Drink and Drive".

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report which he has commissioned into a possible link between the M1 in the vicinity of junction 39 and the M62 in the vicinity of junction 25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I expect to receive the consultant's report in the summer of 1987. I hope to make an announcement in 1987.

A629/A650 Airedale Route

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will compare the expected outturn cost for stage 1 of the A629/A650 Airedale route with the amount budgeted for the project when it originally appeared in the road programme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When the Kildwick to Keighley section of the Airedale route first appeared as a separate scheme (Cmnd. 7132, "Policy for Roads: England 1978") the listed cost was £7 million at November 1976 prices. This is equivalent to £17·3 million at today's prices. The tender sum is £14·8 million. The final works cost is likely to be higher than this.

Rochester Way Relief Road

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to increase the capacity of the Rochester Way relief road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Moore: Since I took over the scheme from the GLC, I have been looking carefully at design details to

ensure that it will properly serve its purpose of removing traffic from surrounding roads, but, as yet, I have no firm plans.

Motorways

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of maintenance per mile of the M3 and how this figure compares with the average for other motorways; if he will give a separate figure for the M1 and M25; if he will indicate which is the most expensive section of the M3 to maintain; and how often the stretch between junctions 3 and 4 has been repaired in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Motorway maintenance costs vary considerably with the age of the road and the incidence of major renewal schemes. Expenditure on structural maintenance in 1984-85 was as follows:

	£/mile
M3	82,592
All motorways	66,059
M1	149,657
M25	4,511

The highest expenditure so far on structural maintenance of the M3 has been incurred between junctions 3 and 4, the first section to be opened in 1971; 5·6 miles of both carriageways of this section have been renewed under a phased programme of five schemes undertaken between 1981 and 1986, at a total cost of about £6·5 million.

Research and Development

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much was spent on research and development, during the last year for which figures are available, by his Department; and what proportion was spent in Wales.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the last year for which published figures are available (1984-85), £32·236 million was spent on research and development in the Department of Transport. It is not known how much of this was spent in Wales.

British Airports Authority plc

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements govern the relationship between the Government and the British Airports Authority plc between vesting and privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The British Airports Authority's business was vested in BAA plc on 1 August 1986. Pending the flotation of BAA plc in summer 1987, all shares will be retained by the Government and the company will remain in the public sector. During this period the powers of the Secretary of State over BAA plc will be those of a sole shareholder over his company.

The members of the authority have become directors of BAA plc, and Sir Norman Payne remains as chairman, his present appointment having been extended to 31 July 1989.

A new memorandum and articles of association have been adopted for the company; these will apply while the company remains in the ownership of the Government. The Secretary of State has also concluded a memorandum of understanding with the directors dealing with aspects of their relationship not covered in the articles of association.

The principle underlying these arrangements is to preserve over BAA plc, while it remains in the public sector, controls which are similar to those that were hitherto exercised over the British Airports Authority as a statutory corporation.

I have placed copies of the memorandum and articles of association and of the memorandum of understanding in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department is considering the clean-up of estuarial waters used for harvesting shellfish on a commercial basis.

Mr. John Patten: Water authorities are responsible for determining their own relative spending priorities. The existence of commercial shell fisheries in their area is one of the factors taken into account. A number of major projects are currently under way to improve estuarial waters. For example, the southern water authority is proposing to spend over £20 million on outfall improvements in the Solent and Southampton Water areas, which will improve water quality over shellfish beds in the area. My Department is keeping the matter under review, but considers that there is no need to depart from existing policy.

Basildon (Housing)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the housing situation in the Vange area in Basildon, and in particular regarding the houses purchased from the local authority, but which have since developed major structural defects.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the announcement I made in the course of my reply to his Adjournment debate on Tuesday 4 November.

Single Persons (Housing)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further initiatives he plans for housing for single people.

Mr. John Patten: My Department's report "Housing Initiatives for Single People of Working Age" describes a number of ways in which both the private and public sector can provide housing for single people. Other measures are the Government's hostels initiative, the introduction of shorthold tenancies and other steps to encourage lettings in the private rented sector. Further measures will include new housing association schemes for shared accommodation for young people wishing to move to take up employment. I outlined these and other measures in my response to a debate initiated by my hon. Friend on 4 November.

Planning Appeals

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals were processed

through his Department in 1985; and how that number compares with those processed in 1975, 1965 and 1955, respectively.

Mr. Tracey: The number of planning appeals under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, or the equivalent earlier powers, processed by the Department is best measured by reference to the number determined and the number withdrawn (with the implication that work done on them was abortive). The numbers for the years requested by my hon. Friend are:

Years	*Appeals determined*	*Appeals withdrawn*
1955	n.a.	n.a.
1965	8,697	4,357
1975	11,846	4,235
1985	14,639	2,110

n.a. = not available.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average time taken to process a planning appeal in 1985 between the receipt of the inspector's report and the announcement of his determination; and how that time compares with 10, 20, and 30 years before, respectively.

Mr. Tracey: I take it that my hon. Friend's question relates only to appeals recovered for decision by the Secretary of State, and not to cases decided by inspectors.

Information on the time taken between receipt of the inspector's report and the issue of the decision is not available before 1977 in respect of cases decided following an inquiry, or before 1981 in respect of cases decided on the basis of written representations. The Department calculates the time taken in the form of the median time.

The median time between receipt of the inspector's report and the issue of the decision letter in inquiry cases was 10 weeks in 1977 and 13 weeks in 1985; and between receipt of the site visit report and the issue of the decision letter in written representations cases was nine weeks in 1981 and 11 weeks in 1985. By the third quarter of 1986, these median times had reduced to eight weeks and nine weeks respectively.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimated costs and savings of the proposed transfer of the functions of the Property Services Agency's Glasgow area office to Edinburgh for the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Chope: The proposed reorganisation of the United Kingdom territorial organisation of PSA will not come into effect until 1 April 1987, and there will, therefore, be no costs and savings in 1986-87. The costs and savings in the following two years are:

£ million

Cost 1987-88	*Savings 1988-89*
1·65	1·09

There are further substantial savings in later years and an investment appraisal shows that payback is expected to occur in 1989-90.

Apart from these savings the reorganisation will produce substantial benefits, which cannot be quantified, through better service to clients and better value for money. It fulfils the recommendation of the PAC made in its 30th report 1983-84 and its 19th report 1984-85 that the chain of command should be shortened.

The net costs and savings include savings through increased managerial efficiency through the organisation as a whole.

Specific figures for the Glasgow area office are not available.

Out-of-Town Shopping Centres

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the number of current planning applications and appeals, respectively, relating to out-of-town shopping centres sited on established green belt land in England, giving the total square footage of each;

(2) if he will list the number of current planning appeals relating to out-of-town shopping centres in England, giving the total square footage of each;

(3) if he will list the number of current outstanding planning applications for out-of-town shopping centres in England giving the total square footage of each application.

Mr. Tracey: Although the Department is notified of applications for retail developments which represent substantial departures from the development plan, comprehensive information about applications for retail development, including whether the development is proposed on a site in an approved green belt, is not collected centrally. We have, however, announced that we propose to issue a direction requiring local planning authorities to consult the Department before granting permission for developments involving retail floorspace of 250,000 square feet or more.

I shall write to my hon. Friend with details of the appeals and called-in applications at present before my right hon. Friend for decision, and with details of the extent to which the proposals concerned are in approved green belt land.

Rural Development Areas

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the incentives available in the rural development areas to attract suitable employment projects.

Mr. Tracey: The Development Commission, in conjunction with its agency the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas where appropriate, provides the following main incentives in rural development areas to attract suitable employment projects:

1. 100 per cent. financed advance factory building programme;
2. 50 per cent. financed factory building programme in partnership with local authorities;
3. 25 per cent. grants to the private sector for redundant building conversions;
4. Technical, managerial and business advice to small firms and the provision of loans;
5. Grants to help the establishment of local enterprise agencies;
6. Grant-aid for rural tourism projects;
7. Grant-aid towards special projects where there are clear employment benefits.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the projects that are planned in the rural development areas bounded by the Crewe and

Nantwich constituency, and the total cost of projects in the rural development area in Cheshire for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Tracey: Information in the form requested will take a little time to prepare. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Council House Sales

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table giving information on sales of dwellings by each local authority in England which was referred to in the answer given to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 1 July, *Official Report*, column 460.

Mr. John Patten: I have today placed in the Library the latest figures, to which my hon. Friend refers, giving information reported by each local authority in England on the progress of council house sales to the end of June 1986.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Royal Greenwich Observatory

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be replying to the letter sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 25 September about the siting of the Royal Greenwich Observatory.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has replied today.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Westland plc (Solicitor-General's Letter)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what preparatory action he took and what discussions he had with the Director of Public Prosecutions and his staff concerning the possibility of a police inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January, in the event that an official internal inquiry into the leak was not established; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have nothing to add to the oral answer I gave to the hon. Member on 3 November 1986, at column 680.

Operation Bazaar (Aircraft Losses)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will take steps to release from classification all papers relating to the loss of three Royal Air Force Liberators from 358 Squadron while taking part in Operation Bazaar on 23-24 January 1945 from Jessore and those relating to the subsequent investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

All the surviving RAF operational records relating to the loss of three Liberators from 358 Squadron on 22-23 January 1945 are open in the Public Record Office. The only other relevant RAF records are the casualty files, and as confidential personal documents these remain closed. The records of the special operations executive held in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are classified and they too remain closed. General inquiries from members of the public related to the casualty files are answered by the air historical branch in the MOD, and SOE inquiries are handled by the SOE adviser in the FCO.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Amusement Arcades

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the extent of the correlation between the use by young people of amusement arcades and their subsequent acquisition of a gambling habit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have noted carefully reports which suggest that some young people in some areas may have acquired a habit of gambling on amusement machines, and we shall continue to monitor the situation. However, there seems at present to be little hard evidence about the extent to which use of amusement machines may lead to the acquisition of a habit, either as regards these machines or, subsequently, other forms of gambling.

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to restrict the age at which children may enter amusement arcades; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have at present no plans to do so.

Police (Establishments)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out, by force, the current strength and vacancies for police forces in England and Wales and show the numbers of agreed increases in establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information as at 30 September 1986 is as follows:

Police Force	*Authorised Establishment*	*Actual strength*	*Vacancies*	*Number of additional posts approved since May 1979*
Avon and Somerset	3,020	2,996	24	167
Bedfordshire	1,000	999	1	53
Cambridgeshire	1,140	1,138	2	50
Cheshire	1,845	1,826	19	40
Cleveland	1,474	1,482	—	63
Cumbria	1,130	1,126	4	42
Derbyshire	1,767	1,763	4	58
Devon and Cornwall	2,757	2,762	—	84

Police Force	Authorised Establishment	Actual strength	Vacancies	Number of additional posts approved since May 1979
Dorset	1,211	1,198	13	47
Durham	1,357	1,304	53	8
Dyfed Powys	934	925	9	—
Essex	2,697	2,682	15	[1]172
Gloucestershire	1,164	1,158	6	48
Greater Manchester	6,943	6,755	188	208
Gwent	978	971	7	3
Hampshire	3,105	3,074	31	151
Hertfordshire	1,596	1,575	21	63
Humberside	1,972	1,966	6	33
Kent	2,875	2,889	—	[1]55
Lancashire	3,158	3,074	84	40
Leicestershire	1,733	1,730	3	27
Lincolnshire	1,183	1,155	28	1
Merseyside	4,679	4,577	102	228
Norfolk	1,318	1,299	19	53
Northamptonshire	1,054	1,044	10	104
Northumbria	3,378	3,359	19	53
North Wales	1,316	1,276	40	37
North Yorkshire	1,368	1,363	5	40
Nottinghamshire	2,259	2,210	49	114
South Wales	3,109	3,108	1	40
South Yorkshire	2,881	2,857	24	129
Staffordshire	2,131	2,084	47	65
Suffolk	1,186	1,128	58	98
Surrey	1,639	1,614	25	40
Sussex	2,830	2,792	38	28
Thames Valley	3,367	3,386	—	[2]370
Warwickshire	967	948	19	91
West Mercia	1,953	1,923	30	119
West Midlands	6,684	6,542	142	175
West Yorkshire	5,154	5,134	20	50
Wiltshire	1,049	1,042	7	27
City of London	798	775	23	(−224)
Metropolitan	27,515	[3]26,900	615	926
Total	121,674	119,909	1,811	[4]4,200

[1] Further increases of 25 posts for Essex and 36 for Kent have been approved with effect from 1 November 1986.
[2] Further increases of 50 posts for Thames Valley have been approved with effect from 1 November 1986 and 50 with effect from 1 April 1987.
[3] In the Metropolitan police seconded officers, for example, at university or on central services, count against the authorised establishment. The strength figure given includes 94 such officers.
[4] The total increase does not take account of the reduction of 224 in the City of London's establishment.

Research and Development

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent by his Department on research and development during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion was spent in Wales.

Mr. Waddington: The Home Office spent £14·2 million on research and development in 1985-86: the information as to what proportion of this was spent in Wales is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Extradition Law (Reform)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Brent, East on 24 October, *Official Report*, column 1009, he proposes to bring forward legislation for extradition law reform.

Mr. Mellor: In the next Session.

Police (Car Patrols)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the effectiveness of mixed sex police car patrols compared with all-male patrols.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of the Metropolis informs us that experience has shown that all-male, mixed sex and all-female car crews can all be effective. Officers are selected for these duties on the basis of aptitude, not their sex.

Mr. Vanunu (Kidnapping)

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an immediate inquiry into allegations that Mr. Vanunu, an Israeli citizen, was kidnapped in London by agents of Mossad, the Israeli secret police and was subsequently illegally removed from Britain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 3 November to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), at column 325.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Departmental Papers

Sir John Page asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of his Department's papers have been made available to the public since October 1985.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1 October 1985 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (excluding the Overseas Development Administration) has made the following papers available to the public on request:

Africa
- African Famine
- Apartheid: Past and Present
- Libya: Second International Conference against Imperialism
- Libyan State Terrorism
- Namibia: Chronology, July-December 1985
- The OAU and the Plan for Africa
- Qadhafi and Irish Terrorism
- The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC)

America
- Britain and Argentina: Towards More Normal Relations
- British Connexions with Texas
- Claims to the Falkland Islands
- Hispanic Americans
- The Relationship of the Anglophone Caribbean with Other Non-English Speaking States in the Caribbean

Asia
- Afghanistan Report: International Concern
- Afghanistan at the United Nations
- Afghanistan: The UN-sponsored Talks
- Afghanistan Report: Military Situation
- Afghanistan: Human Rights Report
- Afghanistan: Tradition and the Revolutionary Process
- Afghanistan: Change at the Top
- China-UK: Basic Chronology 1950-55
- China: Energy Prospects
- China: Reform and Its Repercussions
- The Japanese Debate on Education Reform
- The Kurdish Problem
- The Question of Cambodia at the UN Commission on Human Rights from 1978
- The Mongolian People's Republic: General Information
- Sovietisation of Afghanistan
- Soviet Activities in the Indian Ocean
- The Soviet Union's Asian Overtures
- Vietnam in 1986: Obstacles to Change

Eastern Europe
- CSCE: Cultural Forum, Budapest 1985
- East European Energy Prospects

Near and Middle East
- Arab-Israeli and Lebanon Chronology: August-December 1985
- Guide to Middle East Peace Plans

Soviet Union
- New Soviet Party Programme.
- Soviet Bloc Aid to Special Friends.
- The Soviet Economy, 1985-86.
- Soviet Education: The 1984 School Reform.
- Soviet Energy Prospects.
- Soviet Fishing off the Developing Countries.
- Soviet Foreign Trade in 1984.
- Soviet Party Congress.
- Soviet Union: Continued Repression of Dissent.
- Unsolved Problems in Soviet Society.

Western Europe
- Berlin: 25 Years of the Wall.
- Copenhagen Peace Congress, 1986.
- Copenhagen Peace Congress: Further Preparations.
- International Terrorism: The European Response.

Disarmament
- Arms Control and Disarmament Newsletter No. 25.
- Arms Control and Disarmament Newsletter No. 26.
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 1.
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 2.
- Chemical and Biological Weapons: Negotiations for an International Ban.
- Defence and Disarmament Issues (revised leaflets prepared in conjunction with MOD).

Economic
- Aid to the Developing World.
- International Debt Problems of Developing Countries.
- World Food Supplies.
- World Shipping Prospects.
- World Oil Supplies.

General
- The Balance between Civil and Political Rights and Economic and Social Rights: Origins of the Human Rights Declaration.
- The Commonwealth: An Estimation of its Value.
- Government Policy on Overseas Students.
- Internal Review of the British Government and British Council Funded Student Schemes.
- International Reaction to Terrorism.
- Notes on some Major International Space and Satellite Organisations and Spacecraft.
- Remote Sensing of the Earth from Space.
- The role of the International Atomic Energy Agency following the Third Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty: An Exchange of Letters.

Syria

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report*, country by country, what response he has received from each member country of the European Community to Her Majesty's Government's decision to break off diplomatic relations with Syria consequential upon the Syrian Government's complicity in the Nezar Hindawi case.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that my right hon. and learned Friend made on 28 October, at columns 167-74.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make representations to the Government of China in support of the request of Hong Kong's sporting bodies for Hong Kong to be recognised as an international sporting nation after 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The "Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong" provides that after 1997 the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region may on its own, using the name "Hong Kong, China", maintain and develop relations and conclude and implement agreements with states, regions and relevant international organisations in various fields, including the sporting field. Arrangements for putting this provision into effect will be a matter for consultation with the Chinese authorities in due course.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding athletes from Hong Kong competing in international sporting events under the name of Hong Kong after 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the provision of services for handicapped people in Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: A full range of services for handicapped people in Hong Kong is provided by Government Departments and voluntary agencies and co-ordinated by the commissioner for rehabilitation by means of an annual review of the rehabilitation programme plan.

The commissioner is advised by the rehabilitation development co-ordinating committee, which is made up of representatives of the relevant Government Departments and voluntary agencies. Services are aimed at integrating handicapped people into the community, with the objective of enabling them to develop their physical, mental and social capabilities to the full.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the population of the satellite towns of Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Sha Tin and Tsuen Wan in the New Territories at the latest date.

Mr. Renton: The latest population figures for the satellite towns in the New Territories are contained in the Hong Kong 1986 by-census and as at 11 March 1986 were:

	Figure
Yuen Long	75,740
Tuen Mun	262,458
Tai Po	119,679
Sha Tin	355,810
Tsuen Wan (including Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi)	645,603

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Hong Kong Government have for extending the mass transit railway to the satellite towns in the New Territories of Sha Tin, Tuen Mun, Tai Po and Yuen Long; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: There are no plans at present to extend the mass transit railway to Sha Tin. However, Sha Tin and Tai Po new towns are at present served by the Kowloon Canton railway, which provides a full, electric service.

A light rail transit system is being constructed by the Kowloon Canton Railway Corporation to serve Tuen Mun and Yuen Long in the Western New Territories, and will be operational in the latter half of 1988. Both the Kowloon Canton Railway Corporation and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation are investigating the possibility of constructing a rail link to join the Tuen Mun-Yuen Long light rail system with the existing mass transit railway terminal at Tsuen Wan, thereby providing a direct rail link with the urban area.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the rights of trade unions in Hong Kong after 1997.

Mr. Renton: The "Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong" provides that the rights and freedoms as provided for by the laws previously in force in Hong Kong shall be maintained in the Special Administrative Region. These provisions include reference to the freedom to form and join trade unions.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the working of the basic law consultative committee on the future of Hong Kong after 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The drafting of the basic law for the future Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is a matter for the Chinese Government. A Basic Law Drafting Committee, comprising 59 members — 23 of them from Hong Kong — has been established to carry out this work. A Basic Law Consultative Committee also has been established in Hong Kong to reflect the views of the people of Hong Kong on the basic law. It has held several rounds of meetings and has been able to convey to the drafting committee a wide spectrum of views. We welcome this.

China (Reunification)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the peaceful reunification of China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Since 1972 successive Governments have acknowledged the position of the Chinese Government that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China. We consider that this matter is China's internal affair to be settled by the Chinese people themselves.

Bophuthatswana

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 23 October, *Official Report*, columns *973-74*, he will list the official contacts since March 1983 with black leaders in South Africa generally and in homelands other than Bophuthatswana in particular.

Mrs. Chalker: Ministers and officials have had many official contacts with black leaders in South Africa since 1983. A comprehensive list is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 27 October, what evidence he has of a multiracial society in Bophuthatswana.

Mrs. Chalker: The policy of apartheid applied in other parts of South Africa does not appear to be applied within Bophuthatswana; but the latter's creation was itself an expression of the South African Government's policy of "grand apartheid".

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 27 October what are the latest figures he has of the actual financial dependence of Bophuthatswana on South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I cannot add to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend on 29 October, at column 171.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs further to his answer to the hon.

Member for Ynys Môn of 27 October, what efforts he has made to inspect the budget of Bophuthatswana to discover the actual dependence of Bophuthatswana on South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 27 October, he will state the evidence to support his contention that the existence of Bophuthatswana is an expression of the practice of apartheid in South Africa as a whole.

Mrs. Chalker: Bophuthatswana was created by the South African Government to further their policy of separate development.

Tswana People

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the number of Tswana people in (i) South Africa and (ii) Botswana.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows: (i) According to South African estimates there are approximately 1,522,000 Tswana in South Africa, excluding those resident in Bophuthatswana. In 1984 the population of Bophuthatswana was estimated at some 1,667,500, of whom the majority were Tswana.

(ii) the population of Botswana was estimated in 1984 as 1,047,000, of whom the majority are Tswana.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account he takes in formulating his policy on Bophuthatswana of representations made in the past by representatives of Her Majesty's Government as to the right of the Tswana people in South Africa to self-determination.

Mrs. Chalker: We seek to take account of all relevant factors in formulating our policy towards Bophuthatswana, as to all parts of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 27 October, what evidence he has of the desire of the Tswana people for self-determination in the creation of Bophuthatswana.

Mrs. Chalker: None. Bophuthatswana was created without recourse to a referendum.

United Nations (Advancement of Women)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the non-Governmental organisations he has consulted prior to this week's discussion of the implications of the United Nations forward looking strategies for the advancement of women in the third committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York.

Mr. Renton: We are in regular contact with NGOs, particularly through the Women's National Commission and the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, on the implications of the United Nations forward looking strategies for the advancement of women. Their views are taken into account when policy is formulated.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the call for a special session of the United Nations on women early in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: At the 31st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the United Kingdom joined consensus on a resolution which called for the holding of a special session of the commission in 1987. We also joined consensus on the adoption of the agenda of this session, namely, the implications of the Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women for programme planning in the United Nations system, monitoring and review and appraisal of the implementation of the forward looking strategies, strengthening the Commission on the Status of Women, and the programme of future work and provisional agenda for the 33rd session of the commission. This resolution and decision were endorsed unanimously by the Economic and Social Council, of which the United Kingdom is a member. We hope the meeting will be able to conclude successfully all the work in its agenda.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *318*, he will publish details of approaches made *(a)* to the International Red Cross and *(b)* the Argentine Government concerning visits to the Falkland Islands by Argentine families.

Mr. Renton: We remain ready to accept a suitably prepared visit by a bona fide group of close relatives under arrangements made and supervised by the International Committee of the Red Cross. We have made our position clear on a number of occasions to, among others, Parliament, the press and the ICRC. We have informed the Argentine Government directly on a number of occasions. Details of such communications are of course confidential. We still await a positive response fron Argentina.

Mr. Vanunu (Kidnapping)

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will instruct Her Majesty's ambassador in Tel Aviv to press the Israeli Government for clarification about the involvement of the Israeli intelligence service in the alleged kidnapping of Mr. Vanunu in London and his subsequent illegal removal from Britain.

Mr. Renton: In the absence of evidence that any crime has been committed or that Mr. Vanunu was removed from Britain against his will, we have no grounds for intervening with the Israeli authorities.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Car Parks (Privatisation)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the result of the consideration by the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) of the further privatisation of car parks operated by that

Department; what factors preclude the privatisation of all such car parks rather than a proportion of them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Department has undertaken an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of privatisation of car parks outside Belfast which has established that it is desirable to offer car parks in groups to provide a profitable basis for testing the market.

The current programme provides for a significant increase in the extension of the charging system in provincial towns in the course of the next year. This will permit groups of car parks to be offered for management by the private sector in line with the Department's objective to privatise this activity where it is considered cost effective to do so.

Castlereagh Borough Councillors

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the total of *(a)* attendance allowances, *(b)* expenses and *(c)* travelling allowances paid to members of Castlereagh borough council in each month in 1985 and in 1986 to 30 October.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in the form requested.

The total amounts paid to members in the financial year 1985-86 are as follows:

	£
Attendance allowances	9,332
Expenses	1,668
Travelling allowances	3,478

Diplock Trials

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the introduction of three judge courts into Diplock trials is to be discussed at the meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference on 31 October.

Mr. Scott: The meeting which took place on 31 October was a special meeting within the framework of the conference concentrating on cross-border security co-operation.

At the last full meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on 6 October, both sides agreed that the next regular meeting of the conference would consider legal matters, including the administration of justice.

WALES

Employment and Industry (EC Report)

43. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his Department's report to the European Commission on Her Majesty's Government's assumptions about employment and industry until 1990 as it affects Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The United Kingdom regional development programme 1986-90 is the latest United Kingdom document in a series required of all member Governments of the Community as the basis for applications for European Regional Development Fund assistance. Because of Community requirements, the programme contains assumptions about the number of unemployed claimants in each region of the United Kingdom in 1990, but in common with earlier documents in this series, no forecasts of unemployment have been made. The assumptions are based upon the national unemployment assumption from the 1986 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9207) covering the period 1986-87 to 1988-89. The 1990 figure was derived by repeating the assumption for 1988-89 a further year. The national assumption was allocated to regions in proportion to 1985 regional unemployment to reach regional assumptions. No specific assumption about industry was made but in some cases the programme document refers to possible trends.

AIDS

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each health authority the number of persons receiving treatment for acquired immune deficiency syndrome for each of the past five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In Wales, nine individuals have so far been diagnosed as having AIDS, of whom seven have died. So as not to compromise medical confidentiality, it is not our Department's practice to state where individual patients are being treated.

Population (Facility Statistics)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department collect on (i) the percentage of the population having access to a post office in their vicinity, (ii) the percentage of the population having access to a dental surgery in their vicinity, (iii) the percentage of the population having access to a public transport stop in their vicinity, and (iv) the percentage of the population having access to a store satisfying daily needs in their vicinity.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not collected centrally.

Holiday Homes

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the houses classed as second homes or holiday homes in Wales are unfit or are lacking one or more of the basic amenities; and what are the corresponding statistics for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It was estimated in the 1981 census that there were about 23,000 second and holiday homes in Wales. The results of the 1979 Welsh housing and dwelling survey suggested that about one sixth of second and holiday homes in Wales were unfit. The proportion lacking one or more of the basic amenities is not known. No relevant statistics are yet available for years since 1979.

Research and Development

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent by his Department during the last year for which figures are available on research and development.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Department's expenditure in 1985-86 was £2 million.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was allocated to projects in each of the Welsh counties by the European regional development fund during the last year for which figures are available; and for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is as follows:

(a) European Regional Development Fund (Quota) Allocations

County	*1985*	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*	*1981*	*1980*	*1979*
Clwyd	18·7	4·8	10·1	5·9	2·8	6·5	3·6
Dyfed	14·7	3·9	3·7	4·6	0·8	2·2	2·7
Gwent	3·4	8·8	10·6	22·6	6·9	5·5	0·3
Gwynedd	3·8	1·5	1·8	1·5	1·9	1·1	2·1
Mid Glamorgan	3·8	18·6	6·5	3·8	1·4	1·4	2·1
Powys	1·3	1·5	nil	0·4	0·6	1·0	0·1
South Glamorgan	2·8	22·9	6·5	5·4	6·5	13·9	11·0
West Glamorgan	8·4	2·3	7·1	2·0	3·2	1·5	3·8
All Wales Total	56·9	65·6	47·3	50·7	25·5	33·1	25·7

Notes:

(1) All figures have been independently rounded.

(2) The all-Wales figures for 1982, 1983 and 1984 include commitments on projects which cannot be allocated on a county basis. Projects where actual expenditure is definable to a single county may also benefit a much wider area.

(3) Figures represent gross commitments approved by the European Commission each year. Commitments in each year therefore depend in part on the level of schemes being undertaken by local and public authorities which are eligible for ERDF support, and fulfil the Community's priorities for such assistance.

In addition to commitments under the fund's main stream "quota" a further £18 million has been allocated under special "non quota" provisions for areas affected by the rundown in the steel industry, broken down as follows:

(b) European Regional Development Fund (Non-Quota) Allocations

County	*1984*	*1982*
Clwyd	1·8	2·7
Dyfed	0·7	—
Gwent	2·0	2·7
South Glamorgan	0·7	2·7
West Glamorgan	2·0	2·7
All Wales Total	7·2	10·0

Notes:

(1) All figures are independently rounded.

(2) The allocation to Dyfed in 1984 is in respect of the Llanelli travel to work area only; the allocation to West Glamorgan in 1984 is for disbursement in an area comprising the county of West Glamorgan and that part of the former Port Talbot travel to work area which lies in Mid Glamorgan.

Out-of-town Shopping Centres

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of current outstanding planning applications for out-of-town shopping centres in Wales, giving the total square footage of each application.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of current planning appeals relating to out-of-town shopping centres in Wales, giving the total square footage of each.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The current planning appeals relating to out-of-town shopping centres in Wales are:

1. 65,000 sq ft: superstore, petrol filling station at Skewfields, New Inn, Pontypool, Gwent.
2. 45,000 sq ft: retail development, Plasmarl Industrial Estate, Swansea.
3. 12,900 sq ft: retail store at New Hedges, Tenby, Dyfed.
4. Area not known: four retail units, Upper Boat, Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan.
5. 95,000 sq ft: retail warehouse units, Wern Industrial Estate, Rogerstone, Gwent.
6. 30,350 sq ft: retail store, Mill Parade, Newport, Gwent.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Research and Development (Expenditure)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent by his Department on research and development during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion was spent in Wales.

Mr. Donald Thompson: During the financial year 1985-86 my Department spent £124·1 million on research and development. Of this amount, £68·6 million was spent externally, mainly with the Agricultural and Food Research Council, of which approximately £2·7 million was spent in Wales with the council's Welsh plant breeding station and with other contractors. The balance of £55·5 million was spent on in-house research and development mainly by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service. A good deal of ADAS' research and development is of relevance to farming conditions in Wales and approximately £2·2 million of this work was carried out in the Principality for the benefit of farming in Wales and the west of Britain. The in-house figure also includes nearly £0·5 million spent on research and development in the fisheries experiment station at Conwy.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the extent of public involvement with the company Trent Grain which holds intervention stocks of agricultural produce, stating *(a)* whether any public money is likely to be lost, *(b)* whether there is evidence of any stock loss, *(c)* when officials first appreciated the nature of the firm's problems,

(d) what action was subsequently taken to limit the extent of possible public financial loss and *(e)* whether officials studied the company reports of the last three years.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *420*]: The first indication of the financial difficulties of Trent Grain was noted in the summer of last year. A volumetric analysis, of the kind used regularly by the board for monitoring purposes, was then carried out and indicated a possible stock loss. There followed a further analysis which tended to confirm this suspicion, no further deliveries were made and, to facilitate checkweighing, grain was sold from the store as quickly as possible. In May 1986 it was learnt that a grain trader had secured a charge on the company's assets. Cargo superintendents were appointed to guard the store and to prevent a removal of intervention grain. Check-weighing has confirmed a shortfall; action is in hand aimed at recovering the loss. The company's report for 1983 and 1984 were studied by officials, but the 1985 report has not yet been submitted to Companies House.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels have left the fleets in England, Wales and Scotland due to factors other than decommissioning in the period since 1981.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1986, c. *85*]: Precise records are not available, but it is estimated that in the order of 1,000 fishing vessels over 10m in length based in England, Wales and Scotland have been deleted from their respective fleet registers since 1981 due to factors other than decommissioning. However, some of these will have joined a fleet elsewhere in the United Kingdom and so still form part of the overall United Kingdom fleet. The reasons for the other deletions include vessels being sold abroad, being sunk or wrecked, or being judged by local fisheries offices as no longer fishing commercially.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Inspectorate

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will outline by what methods the Wages Inspectorate distinguishes between workers aged over and under 21 years for the purposes of enforcing the Wages Act 1986; and what is the additional inspection time allocated for this new check.

Mr. Lee: If, in the course of a check, it appears to the inspector that an employer may be paying a young worker less than the statutory minimum, verification of the worker's date of birth is sought from the employer. Where appropriate the date is confirmed by interviewing the worker. This is not a new check and no additional work is involved. Inspectors have always checked dates of birth to confirm compliance with wages orders which specify age-related minimum rates of pay.

Employment Measures

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General on what date Link Recruitment Ltd. was operating as Joblink, approved by the Manpower Services Commission as a recruitment agent for community programme sponsors and managing agents; what are the maximum allowable costs charged by Joblink to advertise community programme vacancies; and what is the maximum placement fee paid by the Manpower Services Commission to Joblink for recruiting to community programme vacancies.

Mr. Lee: MSC approval is not required for recruitment agencies submitting applicants for posts on the community programme. Vacancies for managers, supervisors and certain specialist workers within the community programme are advertised by professional and executive recruitment.

Under an agreement reached with the Federation of Personnel Services on 1 October 1983 any private recruitment agency may submit candidates for these posts. A placement fee of £257 is paid to the agency submitting the successful candidate.

Unemployment Benefit

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Paymaster General (1) how many recipients of unemployment benefit were disbarred under the trial scheme operating in the Crewe and Nantwich travel-to-work area;

(2) how many recipients of unemployment benefit were interviewed in the new trial scheme operated in the Crewe and Nantwich constituency;

(3) how many recipients of unemployment benefit were temporarily deprived of payment, and how many subsequently had their entitlement confirmed, under the trial scheme recently operating in the Crewe and Nantwich constituency.

Mr. Lee: Information is not available in the form asked. Crewe unemployment benefit office was one of 12 offices taking part in availability testing experiments in questioning more closely whether claimants were available for work. Between 16 June 1986 and 19 September 1986 all claimants at the Crewe office reaching their sixth week of unemployment were asked to complete a questionnaire. Questionnaires were issued to 770 claimants and this resulted in 138 claims being referred to the independent adjudicating authorities. Of these, 20 were disallowed on availability grounds and 118 were allowed.

Instant Muscle Limited

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Paymaster General whether he will take steps to increase the funding of Instant Muscle Limited under the Voluntary Projects Programme for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The voluntary projects programme budget for 1987-88 has not been finalised. Decision on the level of resources available to individual organisations will take account of the overall budget allocated to the programme.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to how many jobs have been created by Instant Muscle Limited; and at what cost to public funds per job.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 30 October at column *216*.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Spencer asked the Paymaster General if he will publish an estimate of the increase in the number of businesses registered for value added tax in Leicestershire between the end of 1979 and the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: The number of businesses registered for value added tax in Leicestershire is estimated to have increased by around 2,000 between the end of 1979 and the end of 1983.

Health and Safety Executive

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General how many staff at the Health and Safety Executive are engaged soley on the enforcement of industrial air pollution regulations; what is the average length of time between notification of nuisance and action by the firm responsible to remedy it; and what actions are taken by the Health and Safety Executive to abate such nuisance.

Mr. Trippier: There are 33 industrial air pollution inspectors in the field and seven at the inspectorate's London headquarters.

Inspectors enforce the air pollution control provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and associated legislation at "prescribed" premises. Such premises are required to satisfy the "best practicable means" requirements of the industrial air pollution inspectorate to the control of atmosphere emissions. Where the "best practicable means" requirements are not complied with, the inspectorate takes appropriate enforcement action.

The time allowed to firms to rectify failures in emission control will depend on the nature of the substances emitted and the degree of remedial work necessary to achieve effective control.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Marlow asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures available for each economic region of the United Kingdom of the numbers invited to attend restart interviews; how many have attended interviews so far in each region; and how many of those invited have ceased to claim benefit in each region.

Mr. Trippier: Figures are available only for Manpower Services Commission administrative regions. The information requested is given in the table and relates to the period 12 May to 9 October 1986.

	Numbers invited to attend	*Numbers attending*	*Numbers invited ceasing to claim benefit*
South East	44,038	28,647	9,594
London	77,100	46,530	7,822
South West	24,239	16,925	4,975
West Midlands	52,672	38,778	6,429
East Midlands	39,394	26,336	7,586
Yorkshire and Humberside	49,884	34,359	8,703
North West	99,877	74,134	15,993
Northern	45,404	34,469	8,161
Wales	31,219	22,049	6,943
Scotland	58,841	44,224	10,005
TOTAL	522,668	366,451	86,211

The numbers invited ceasing to claim benefit will include a proportion who would have ceased to claim benefit in any case.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

Mr. Hayward asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the European Commission action programme for small and medium sized enterprises.

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) on 23 October 1986 at columns *936-37*, announced the adoption on 20 October by the EC Industry Council of a resolution approving the broad strategy of the European Commission's action programme for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The aims of the programme are the creation of a favourable environment for SMEs, including control and reduction of administrative burdens on business and specific assistance to improve their flexibility and access to capital. The programme should in due course be of significant benefit to the United Kingdom. Fuller details are in the explanatory memorandum in document 8992/86. Unfortunately the Commission's action programme did not become available until after the House went into recess, and the related resolution reached the Industry Council before the Select Committee on European Legislation had had an opportunity to consider it. The Select Committee has since done so and made no recommendation for further consideration by the House.

In the Government's view it would have been prejudicial to the interests of the United Kingdom to have withheld agreement, on account of the absence of parliamentary scrutiny, to the resolution in question at the Industry Council. In reaching this decision, the Government took into account both that the action programme was in part a response to a United Kingdom initiative and that our position as President of the Community requires us to do everything possible to facilitate the taking forward of Community business. It was also the case that the resolution sought agreement only to the broad strategy of the Commission's action programme. Individual measures arising therefore, other than those which the European Commission can implement administratively, will depend on specific proposals being put forward by the Commission and will, of course, be subject to parliamentary scrutiny in the normal way.

I regret that the normal parliamentary procedure was not followed on this occasion but in the circumstances I hope that the House will understand why it was felt necessary, in the overall United Kingdom interest, to act in this way.

Race Relations

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General when his Department will be appointing an adviser on race relations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There was a strong field of applicants for this appointment. Unfortunately, none of the suitable candidates combined sufficient industrial or business experience with other qualities to satisfy all the needs of the job as I should have hoped to see it develop. No appointment will therefore be made. However, we are

inviting two of the candidates to be members of the Department's race relations employment advisory group, to which I am sure they could make a valuable contribution.

Work Availability Test

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list all those Department of Employment offices in which the new work availability test has been introduced;

(2) if he will list for each region and for each Department of Employment office in the region the date at which the new work availability test will be introduced.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 November 1986 at column *329*]: The new availability for work test has been introduced at Yeovil, Alloa, Camberley, Farnborough, Erith, Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, Salisbury, Weymouth, Winton, Devonport, Paignton, Plymouth 'A', 'B' and 'C', Torquay, Redruth, Alnwick, Amble, Ashington, Bedlington, Berwick, Blyth, Cramlington, Gosforth, Morpeth, North Shields, Wallsend, West Moor, Whitley Bay, Blaydon-on-Tyne, Hexham, Newcastle 'A' and 'C', Newcastle-upon-Tyne East, Dalkeith, Edinburgh 'C' and 'D', Eyemouth, Galashiels, Leith, Loanhead, Musselburgh, Portobello, Irvine, Kilbirnie, Ayr 'B', Cumbernauld, Grangemouth, Kilsyth, Canterbury, Gillingham, Ramsgate, Sheerness, Sittingbourne, Aldershot, Epsom, Horsham, Redhill, Weybridge, Woking, Maidenhead, Newbury, Winchester, Dover, Folkestone, Streatham, Tooting 'B', Wimbledon and Dartford unemployment benefit offices.

The test is being introduced progressively in all unemployment benefit offices during the next few months; the dates for individual offices will be determined locally according to resources and other operational issues.

SCOTLAND

Regional Aid

41. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will reconsider the current arrangements for regional aid, with specific reference to restoring full regional development status to the entire area covered within the boundaries of the Highland region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The present assisted area structure was established less than two years ago after a comprehensive review of regional policy and the assisted area map. It is important to achieve some stability in the present arrangements and I do not believe that the time is yet ripe for considering any changes of status. Highland region as a whole continues to benefit from the extensive powers of the Highlands and Islands Development Board, and from access to the European regional development fund.

Employment and Industry (EC Report)

42. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's report to the European Commission on Her Majesty's Government's assumptions about employment and industry until 1990 as it affects Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The United Kingdom regional development programme 1986-90 is the latest United Kingdom document in a series required of all EEC member states as the basis for applications for assistance from the European regional development fund. Because of community requirements, the programme contains assumptions about the number of unemployed claimants in each region of the United Kingdom in 1990. These are based on the national unemployment assumption from the 1986 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9207) covering the period 1986-87 to 1988-89. They are not forecasts. The 1990 figure was derived by repeating the assumption 1988-89 a further year. The national assumption was allocated to regions in proportion to 1985 regional unemployment to reach regional assumptions. No specific assumption about industry in Scotland was made, although in some cases the programme document refers to possible trends.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to arrange for right hon. and hon. Members whose constituencies contain nuclear power stations to receive copies of the emergency handbook used by the station operators and managers and the emergency services plan for emergencies at that power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The operators of civil nuclear installations in Scotland have agreed to make available to the public copies of their site emergency plans, edited only to remove sensitive details such as the names and telephone numbers of personnel. These will replace the summaries of the plans which have been generally available for some eight years.

I am pleased to record that UKAEA has already done this in respect of its nuclear power development establishment at Dounreay, and has sent copies to the hon. Members for Caithness and Sutherland, (Mr. Maclennan) and for the adjacent constituencies of Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), and Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). Copies are also being placed in the Libraries here and in the other place. SSEB and BNFL will be taking comparable action as soon as practicable.

Whether the operational plans prepared by the emergency services of local authorities or health boards are made available as suggested is a matter for local decision in each case.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what assessment Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has made as to whether the management and staff at Torness power station have the necessary training, experience and qualifications to deal with fault conditions which may occur during the commissioning and operation of the reactor equipment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate have any plans to require the management and staff at Torness power station to undergo training and proficiency testing with simulator equipment, including simulation of fault situations, before further commissioning of the reactors is approved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The conditions of the Torness nuclear site licence granted by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate require the South of Scotland Electricity Board to appoint suitably qualified and experienced persons to operate the plant. HMNII must be notified of

the names, qualifications and experience of those persons and it has the power to prevent individual appointments if it considers them to be inappropriate.

Both management and staff at Torness are undergoing training with simulators which represent advance gas cooled reactor behaviour, including fault conditions, and the standards achieved under training are assessed by the instructors. Such training is a continuing commitment throughout the commissioning and operation of a reactor. HMNII inspectors have been informed of the training arrangements and are satisfied with the progress of this training.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Bankruptcies

10. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate how many bankruptcies there have been in the last 12 months.

Mr. Butcher: The provisional estimate is 7,097 bankruptcies in England and Wales in the 12 months to September.

Takeovers

12. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many takeovers have occurred in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: During the 12 months to end-June 1986, 506 companies were acquired.

Manufacturing Output

16. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and how this compares with the figure for the same month seven years ago.

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Member will appreciate that monthly data can be erratic. However, since the trough of the recession in 1981 manufacturing output has increased by 12 per cent. to reach a level of 104.1 in August 1986, based on 1980 equal to 100. This was some 2½ per cent. lower than the level of output in August 1979.

Austin Rover

17. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has had any recent discussions with the new head of Austin Rover concerning employment levels and future investment policies.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend and I meet Mr. Day, the Chairman of Austin Rover and of the Rover Group from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest: my right hon. Friend last met him on 4 November.

Research and Development Funding

18. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current situation for research and development funding from his Department.

Mr. Pattie: My Department plans to spend £415 million in 1986-87 on support for research and development.

Textile and Clothing Industries

20. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what help his Department is giving to the British textile and clothing industries.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Some £300 million was received or offered over the last five years to textile and clothing firms (together with footwear firms) in the United Kingdom largely by way of regional assistance. Earlier this year my right hon. Friend announced a £4½ million scheme for assisting universities and colleges to buy advanced textile equipment in order to improve training facilities for the industry. We also intend, subject to parliamentary approval, to make a grant available to the British Fashion Council to help it to promote United Kingdom fashions.

Consumer Protection

21. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any further proposals for the promotion of consumer protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Government intend to legislate, when parliamentary time permits, on product liability and misleading price indications and to introduce a general safety requirement. We also intend to lay before Parliament regulations implementing the European Community directive on misleading advertising.

My hon. and learned Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, chaired a meeting of the Council of Ministers on 29 October at which progress was made towards Community action on a number of consumer issues.

My Department's review of the legislation on pyramid selling has been completed and I expect to issue a consultation paper on this before the end of the year.

Stock Exchange (Deregulation)

22. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to progress with the deregulation of the stock exchange.

Mr. Channon: Minimum commissions for dealings on the stock exchange were removed by The Stock Exchange Council on 27 October.

Northern Region

23. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further proposals he has to attract industry to the northern region.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall continue to pursue an active regional policy to create investment and jobs, backed up by national policies to encourage jobs through wealth creation. I support the region's own initiative in creating the Northern Development Company.

Space Policy

24. **Mr. Michael Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what formal representations he has received from the British National Space Centre concerning the future of the United Kingdom space policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I have received the United Kingdom National Space Plan from the Director General of the

British National Space Centre. The Government are currently considering their response to the proposals, and I hope to be able to make an announcement shortly.

Greek Cement Imports

25. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the response so far to the representations by the Minister for Trade, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), to the European Commission regarding Greek cement imports into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Commission has indicated that it appreciates the potential threat to the United Kingdom industry and has taken the matter up with Greek Ministers.

Manufacturing Investment

26. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current level of investment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Pattie: Investment in manufacturing rose by nearly 6 per cent. in 1985, and was 25 per cent. higher than in 1983; further growth is expected for 1986. The underlying determinants of manufacturing investment — continuing growth in the economy, buoyant profits, improved profitability and a low rate of inflation — remain favourable.

28. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the Trades Union Congress to discuss investment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend meets the TUC regularly at the National Economic Development Council, where matters relevant to improving the United Kingdom's industrial performance are discussed. He has no plans for a separate meeting on this subject.

National Infrastructure (Investment)

27. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is having any discussions with the Confederation of British Industry about investment in the national infrastructure.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend meets the CBI regularly at the National Economic Development Council where infrastructure investment has been discussed. He has no plans for a separate meeting with the CBI on this subject.

Interest Rates (Manufacturing Industry)

29. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the implications of the latest increase in interest rates for the output of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Pattie: An increase in interest rates of 1 percentage point costs industry £250 million a year, compared with the cost of a similar increase in wages of £1 billion a year. Since the Budget, however, interest rates have fallen by 1·5 percentage points. This can only benefit manufacturing output and investment.

Rural Postal Services

30. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, he will discuss the rural postal services.

Mr. Pattie: I meet the chairman of the Post Office from time to time to discuss matters of current interest. But I am not aware of any developments affecting rural postal services generally which I need to raise with him.

EEC (Trade Balance)

31. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the surplus or deficit in trade in manufactures with the European Economic Community and the rest of the world, respectively, over the most recent 12 month period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ending September there was a deficit of £10 billion on our trade with the Community and a surplus of £5¼ billion on our trade with the rest of the world, on the balance of payments basis.

Rolls-Royce plc

32. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet the major trade unions representing the staff of Rolls-Royce plc.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present for such a meeting. I will, however, be meeting a delegation (on 2 December) to discuss the Government's privatisation proposals.

Motor Fuel Prices

33. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will direct the Director General of Fair Trading, under section 13 of the Competition Act 1980, to inquire into and report on the differentials in respect of motor fuel prices between densely populated areas and the remote rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: As part of his duties under the Fair Trading Act, the Director General of Fair Trading monitors competition in the motor fuel market. He has found no evidence of anti-competitive practices which would justify action under the competition legislation at this time.

The powers under section 13 of the Competition Act to investigate prices of major public concern have never been used; and it would be inappropriate to use them other than in the most exceptional circumstances. It is not clear that such circumstances exist at present in the motor fuel market.

I nevertheless remain willing to consider taking action if circumstances change.

Leicester

34. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to promote the growth of the traditional industries of the city of Leicester.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My Department continues to provide its nationally available schemes of assistance. Firms in Leicester including those in the traditional industries have made good use of these.

Rover Group plc

35. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of Rover Group plc.

Mr. Channon: Mr. Day's review of the group is continuing. I expect to receive his conclusions in due course.

38. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Rover Group to discuss Government support for the motor industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend last met Mr. Day on 4 November when they discussed a number of issues of mutual interest.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

36. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the conclusion of negotiations on the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Alan Clark: It was agreed on 1 August by the signatories of the multi-fibre arrangement that it should be extended for a further five-year period. The Community has been negotiating the renewal of its bilateral agreements under the arrangement and 25 new agreements have now been initialled. The detailed quota levels which have been negotiated will be published in a Community regulation after all the negotiations are completed.

The new protocol and the agreements which have been negotiated meet the United Kingdom objectives that we outlined to the House in May 1985 and February 1986 and further details on these are given in a written answer on 21 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) at column *779-80*.

Manufactured Goods (Trade Deficit)

37. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the trade deficit in manufactured goods.

Mr. Channon: I meet the CBI regularly at the National Economic Development Council and on other occasions. At present I have no plans for a separate meeting on this subject.

UK-Irish Republic (Postal Charges)

39. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what notice Her Majesty's Government have received from the Government of the Irish Republic of changes in the charges made for postage between the United Kingdom and the Republic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: None. The charges made for mail between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are a matter for the Post Office and the Republic's postal authorities.

Regional Aid

40. **Mr. Warren** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total amount of money paid out by his Department on regional aid in each of the last five financial years at 1986 values.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Given that responsibility for regional development grants expenditure in Scotland and Wales transferred from my Department for the Scottish and Welsh Offices respectively on 29 November 1984 the answer to the question as set does not provide a consistent run of figures. For consistency, expenditure on regional aid at 1985-86 prices by Department and by the Scottish and Welsh Offices on Regional Development Grants after 29 November 1984 was as follows:

Expenditure[1] at 1985-86 prices[2]

	£ million
1981-82	822·0
1982-83	861·5
1983-84	538·6
1984-85	487·4
1985-86[3]	407·8

If expenditure on regional development grants by the Scottish and Welsh Offices is excluded from the above table the figures are as follows:

Expenditure[1] at 1985-86 prices[2]

	£ million
1981-82	822·0
1982-83	861·5
1983-84	538·6
1984-85	405·5
1985-86[3]	215·9

Notes:

The items included in the expenditure are regional selective assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 and regional development grants (both old-style and new-style).

[1] All figures are gross and include payments to nationalised industries.

[2] Expenditure on a 1985-86 price basis for each year is calculated by applying the appropriate deflator to expenditure at current prices.

[3] Figures for 1985-86 are provisional estimates.

South Korea

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has about recent steps taken by the Government of South Korea to remove barriers to the import of British textile goods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government and our European Community partners have expressed concern at the immediate imposition of import surveillance and a low quota, following the liberalisation of wollen textiles on 1 July this year. The Korean Trade and Industry Vice Minister has assured me that Korea intends to raise the quota progressively to achieve full liberalisation by the end of 1987

Bathroom Fittings (Imports)

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, what representations he has received from the Armitage Shanks Group Ltd., concerning the effects of imports upon the British bathroom fitting industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My officials, together with an official of the Deparment of the Environment, held a meeting recently with representatives of Armitage Shanks Group Ltd. to discuss their concern. My Department is now considering what steps might be taken as a result of those discussions.

Research and Development

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much was spent by his Department on research and development during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion was spent in Wales.

Mr. Butcher: The provisional estimate of expenditure on research and development by the Department of Trade and Industry during 1985-86 was £367 million. Expenditure in Wales is not recorded separately.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the National Economic Development Council to discuss research and development funding.

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend the Minister of State attended a meeting of the National Economic Development Council this morning. The Council has from time to time discussed R and D funding and I anticipate that it will be discussed at future meetings since R and D is an issue which is of great importance to improving the United Kingdom's industrial performance.

South Africa

Mrs. Shields asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the value of imports from South Africa in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The value of imports from South Africa for the first nine months of the current year was £642 million.

North-east England

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's report to the European Commission on Her Majesty's Government's assumptions about employment and industry until 1990 as it affects north-east England.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The United Kingdom's regional development programme 1986-1990 was submitted to the European Commission as a basis for applying for funds from the European regional development fund. The regional profile on the north-east referred to various constraining factors on prospects for the regional economy in the short term, but also describd development objectives and measures, including measures of assistance to industry.

CIVIL SERVICE

Assisted Areas

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Minister for the Civil Service what current proposals exist for Government Departments to transfer Civil Service employment from assisted to non-assisted areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Departmental proposals to relocate existing work or to locate new work involve consultative procedures designed to ensure that regional and urban interests are taken fully into account. A move from an assisted to a non-assisted area would take place only exceptionally and would need to be justified by reasons of operational and cost efficiency. Of the proposals currently under consideration, a few include options for moves from assisted to non-assisted areas, but none has reached a stage where it can be regarded as firm.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consider removing value added tax from products such as burglar alarms and safety locks and bolts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: While householders and businesses should take reasonable precautions to protect their property from theft, reliefs from VAT have to be strictly limited and cannot be introduced for every item of expenditure for which a social justification may be claimed.

Exchange Controls

Mr. Galley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the new employment generated in the United Kingdom as a result of outward investment since the abolition of exchange controls.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986]: Employment in the United Kingdom depends on real wages and profitability in the United Kingdom. Since the abolition of exchange controls net overseas assets have increased more than sixfold to £80½ billion and are generating income of over £4 billion a year for the benefit of the United Kingdom economy, and direct investment overseas by British companies is often designed to provide suppliers' orders and distribution for goods manufactured in the United Kingdom. It is not possible to quantify the impact of these factors on employment.

Betting

Mr. Charles Morrison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the revenue from *(a)* off-course betting duty and *(b)* on-course betting duty for 1985-86; and what was the change from the previous year;

(2) what information he has on the betting turnover *(a)* off-course and *(b)* on-course for 1985-86; and what was the change from the previous year;

(3) what information he has on the betting turnover *(a)* off-course and *(b)* on-course for the six months, 5 April 1986 to 5 October 1986; and what was the change from the corresponding period for the previous year;

(4) what was the revenue from *(a)* off-course betting duty and *(b)* on-course betting duty for the six months 5 April to 5 October 1986; and what was the change from the corresponding period the previous year.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986]: Following is the information:

	Duty		Taxed stakes	
	Off-course	On-course[1]	Off-course	On-course[1]
1985-86 (£ million)	296·6	20·0	3,707·8	499·6
Change from 1984-85 (£ million)	+22·0	+1·5	+275·4	+38·3
Change from 1984-85 (Percentage)	+8·0	+8·3	+8·0	+8·3
April-September 1986[2] [3] (£ million)	177·2	11·5	2,214·6	282·7
Change from April-September 1985 (£ million)	+11·6	−0·6	+145·0	−15·1
Change from April-September 1985 (Percentage)	+7·0	−5·0	+7·0	−5·0

[1] On-course figures include Totalisators.
[2] Figures cover period 1 April to 30 September.
[3] Provisional.

ENERGY

Private Coal Mines

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will take steps to introduce greater competition into the coalmining industry by extending the opportunities for operators of private mines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This would require a change in legislation for which I have no plans.

British Gas (Flotation)

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide information, in the same form as the answer of 24 May 1985 in relation to British Telecom, about all fees and commissions so far paid, or to be paid, to primary underwriters, sub-underwriters, financial advisers, legal advisers, auditors and stockbrokers in connection with the flotation of British Gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The aggregate cost of the British Gas sale will be published after the flotation, as soon as the information is available.

Research and Development (Expenditure)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much was spent by his Department on research and development during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion was spent in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department's spend on projects based in Wales represents some 2 per cent. of its non-nuclear Research and Development expenditure, which is provisionally estimated to be £40 million in 1985-86. While it is not possible to identify all cases of public sector energy Research and Development in Wales, expenditure on Research and Development by the public sector fuel industries there is substantial and includes some £6·8 million by British Coal on the Point of Ayr project.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the number of retirement pensioners who will lose housing benefit as a result of the changes announced on 22 October, of the average loss to pensioners and of how many pensioners will lose *(a)* up to £1 a week, *(b)* over £1 and up to £2 a week, *(c)* over £2 and up to £3 a week, *(d)* over £3 and up to £4 a week and *(e)* more than £4 a week;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of retirement pensioners who will lose all entitlement to housing benefit as a result of the changes announced on 22 October;

(3) how many of those retirement pensioners who will lose *(a)* some housing benefit and *(b)* all housing benefit as a result of the changes announced on 22 October he estimates are (i) local authority tenants and (ii) private tenants.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of retirement pensioners who will lose housing benefit supplement as a result of the changes to supplementary benefit arrangements announced on 22 October.

Mr. Lyell: The number of retirement pensioners affected is too small for a reliable estimate to be made. In such cases the reduction as result of these changes will not in general exceed 10 pence a week.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the percentage increases in non-dependant deductions from housing benefit for rent and rates which will take effect in April 1987.

Mr. Lyell: Non-dependant deductions are normally uprated in line with the housing element of the Retail Price Index. The increases announced on 22 October are in line with the 2·9 per cent. movement in this element between January and September 1986.

Waiting Times (Waltham Forest)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans have been prepared by the North East Thames regional health authority to reduce hospital waiting times in Waltham Forest.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked all regional chairmen to lead their districts in a drive to reduce waiting lists and waiting times. We are currently studying their reports closely. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the regional health authority for detailed information of local proposals.

National Insurance (Self-employment)

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now review the rules for establishing the status of self-employment for national insurance contribution purposes, in the light of Her Majesty's Government's policy for promoting self-employment.

Mr. Lyell: Officials of the Department are reviewing the procedures for establishing whether people are self-employed for National Insurance purposes. The aims of this review include ensuring that advice is readily available at an early stage in cases of doubt and that the criteria of establishing self-employed status are consistently applied.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the funding available to the Crewe district health authority for the years 1979-80 to 1985-86 inclusive as a percentage of the funding available to the Mersey regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested for the years 1982-83 to 1985-86 is as follows:

Year	*per cent.*
1982-83	14·4
1983-84	14·2
1984-85	14·2
1985-86	14·2

The figures are based on net revenue expenditure as shown in health authorities' summarised accounts. I regret that information on district-level expenditure is not available centrally for the years prior to 1982-83.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors and nurses there were in the Mersey region; and what percentage of these were in the Crewe district health authority for each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: Such information as is available centrally is shown in the table; I am sorry that I am unable to provide all of the information requested.

Figures for doctors and dentists in Crewe district health authority, which formed part of Cheshire area health authority before the NHS reorganisation, are not centrally available prior to 1982. From 1982 we have figures for all doctors employed in the district health authority except for senior registrars and consultants, whose contracts are held by the regional health authority. The district health authorities where these staff work cannot be identified centrally. There will therefore be more doctors actually working in the Crewe district health authority than are accounted for in the table.

Figures for non-medical staff are not available prior to 1982 on a comparable basis with those for later years, due to the effects of the 1982 National Health Service reorganisation on the Cheshire area health authority.

The available information is shown in the table.

NHS directly employed medical and dental and nursing and midwifery staff

Staff in post at 30 September	*Whole-time equivalents*[1] *Mersey RHA* *Nursing and midwifery*[2]	*Medical and dental*[3]	*Staff in DHA as percentage of staff in RHA (WTEs) Crewe DHA* *Nursing and midwifery*[2] *per cent.*	*Medical and dental*[3] *per cent.*
1979	20,960	1,990	n/a	n/a
1980	21,410	2,080	n/a	n/a
1981	22,370	2,180	n/a	n/a
1982	22,450	2,160	7·5	4·5
1983	22,310	2,220	7·7	4·1
1984	21,850	2,220	8·0	4·4
1985	22,150	2,270	8·2	4·4

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] All staffing figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents. Percentages are calculated on unrounded figures.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Includes all permanent paid, honorary and locum staff in the hospital and community health services. Includes hospital practitioners and part-time medical/dental officers (clinical assistants).

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the funding for acute units in the Mersey regional health authority for each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: The annual cost returns submitted to the Department show the following expenditure for the authorities in the Mersey region:

Mersey Region

Hospital type acute	*Expenditure 1979-80* £	*Expenditure 1980-81* £	*Expenditure 1981-82* £	*Expenditure 1982-83* £	*Expenditure 1983-84* £	*Expenditure 1984-85* £	*Expenditure 1985-86* £
Over 300 beds	33,619,067	43,159,576	47,228,011	53,425,326	64,778,941	69,109,046	
101-300 beds	11,107,091	13,077,335	13,599,501	11,221,768	7,657,547	7,835,334	
51-100 beds	—	1,083,879	1,109,818	869,002	1,077,715	—	Figures not
1-50 beds	2,020,261	2,517,740	3,223,875	1,995,602	1,886,739	1,811,155	yet available
Mainly acute	48,555,955	62,401,044	65,077,690	95,544,979	100,794,947	105,527,366	
Partly acute	26,658,424	34,826,613	38,952,028	18,426,285	18,511,930	18,237,829	
Total	121,960,798	157,066,187	169,190,923	181,482,962	194,707,819	202,520,730	

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what facilities are immediately available to replace the physiotherapy unit at Oakmere rehabilitation centre in the Crewe district health authority; and what would be the cost of that replacement.

Mrs. Currie: Planning and associated costs involved in the proposed closure of Oakmere rehabilitation centre are the responsibility of Crewe health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the district chairman.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the funding for the Mersey regional health authority for each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86, inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: The net revenue expenditure of Mersey regional health authority, as shown in the authority's accounts, was as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1979-80	286·4
1980-81	367·3
1981-82	405·1
1982-83	433·9
1983-84	453·8
1984-85	480·5
1985-86	504·3

Hospital Funding (East Hertfordshire)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent discussions he has had with East Hertfordshire health authority regarding its level of hospital funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No recent discussions have taken place between Ministers and East Hertfordshire health authority about hospital funding. Financial allocations to district health authorities are a matter for the relevant regional health authority to determine.

Research

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent by his Department on research during the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion was spent in Wales.

Mrs. Currie: The Department spent over £18 million on research and development in 1985-86, of which about 3·4 per cent. was spent in Wales. In addition much of the Department's programme carried out in England benefits Welsh services.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet reached a decision about the future of his Department's small grants scheme for consideration of spontaneous applications for the support of research; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Following the appointment of the Department's new chief scientist, the future of the small grants scheme has been considered by the recently formed Departmental Research Committee. I have accepted the committee's recommendations that the scheme should be discontinued, having regard to the increasing proportion of the funds available for commissioning new research which it has consumed in recent years, and the fact that the temporary suspension of fresh grants announced in a reply given by my predecessor to my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) on 24 June at columns *154-55* has created no difficulties in the administration of the Department's research programme. Projects already receiving support will be carried through to their conclusion. Spontaneous applications for new research grants will still be considered by the Department, but will be dealt with in the context of the overall research programme and priorities.

Elderly Persons (Heating)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice and assistance his Department is giving to elderly people other than those in receipt of supplementary pension-benefit about heating and keeping warm during the cold winter period.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Heating Additions

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what level of financial provision is being made for heating additions in the current winter; and what provision was made in each of the last four years.

Mr. Lyell: Weekly heating additions are payable throughout the year, and not just in winter months. For current rates of heating I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) on 28 October at Columns *124-25*.

Estimated expenditure on heating additions in 1982-83 was £339 million, and in 1983-84 £396 million. The provisional estimate for 1984-85 is about £400 million. Information for 1985-86 is not available.

Amrinone

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what requests were made to his Department about licensing the medical drug Amrinone; what replies he sent; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what requests his Department received about a clinical trials certificate with oral Amrinone; what reply was sent; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what trials have been conducted in National Health Service hospitals with the medical drug Amrinone; how many patients suffered serious side effects; and if he will make a statement;

(4) on how many occasions Dr. Wilmshurst requested his Department to investigate the pharmaceutical company Sterling-Winthrop under the Medicines Act 1968, for its actions on Amrinone; what replies he sent; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will publish the evidence received in the course of his inquiries into the activities of the pharmaceutical company Sterling-Winthrop regarding its activities with the medical drug Amrinone; and if he will make a statement;

(6) if he will hold an immediate inquiry into the pharmaceutical firm Sterling-Winthrop in respect of its activities relating to the medical drug Amrinone;

(7) what adverse reactions from the medical drug Amrinone were reported to his Department; and if he will investigate the interpretation of the data provided by Sterling-Winthrop.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make an urgent official visit to the regional health authority in the north-west and district health authorities in Manchester to hear about their funding problems, and in particular, the closure of hospital wards and the shortage of nursing staff.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hypothermia

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have died from hypothermia in Portsmouth from the period 1 November 1985 to the latest available date.

Mrs. Currie: The provisional number of deaths to usual residents of Portsmouth county district, with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death, registered in the period 1 November 1985 to 30 September 1986 inclusive, is seven.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department has taken to ensure the maximum possible uptake of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Lyell: People who are out of work and are looking for a job will usually approach one of the 1,000 jobcentres or 1,180 unemployment benefit offices throughout the country. Details of unemployment benefit and who can qualify are given in leaflets available at those offices. Leaflets are also available in DHSS local offices and at Post Offices. No information is available to show how many people who have paid national insurance contributions and qualify for benefit fail to make a claim but unemployment benefit is a long established and well known contributory benefit and I have no reason to think that the number who fail to claim this benefit when entitled is in any way significant.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 6 November 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

War Pensions (Appeals)

Mr. Steen asked the Attorney-General what is the average time taken from the date of notification to the date of disposal of appeals against decisions not to increase war pensions; what is the longest time for which a current appeal has been outstanding; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: For assessment cases heard and determined during the first nine months of 1986, the average interval between the receipt of the notice of appeal at the pensions appeal tribunals' office and the written confirmation of the tribunal's decision was 207 days.

The longest time for which a current assessment appeal has been outstanding is five years and 10 months. This is an exceptional case which has required repeated adjournments. If the hon. Member is concerned about any particular case before the pensions appeal tribunals, the Lord Chancellor will examine the matter accordingly.

Parrot Corporation Ltd.

Mr. Abse asked the Attorney-General when the Director of Public Prosecutions received a final report from the Gwent constabulary about its investigation into the affairs of the Parrot Corporation Ltd.; what are the reasons for the delay in taking a decision as to whether any criminal proceedings are to be commenced; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: A final report was received by the Crown Prosecution Service fraud investigation group from Gwent constabulary on 20 October 1986. It is currently being considered by the fraud investigation group in consultation with leading counsel, and a decision will be made in due course.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Servants (Select Committees)

Q78. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received from trade unions representing civil servants about the Government's decision to instruct civil servants appearing before Select Committees not to answer questions about the conduct of individual officials; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

Southend Hospital

Q87. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the cancer treatment unit at Southend hospital.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Stoneleigh, Kenilworth

Q102. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Stoneleigh, near Kenilworth.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Libya

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister if allegations that United States intelligence reports about Libyan involvement in terrorism were part of a dis-information campaign have led to re-examination of the evidence provided to her before she authorised the use of United States air bases in the United Kingdom for the attack on Libya.

The Prime Minister: No.

EC (Council Meetings)

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps to ensure that Ministers reporting to the House on the outcome of European Economic Community Council meetings continue to do so by a full statement in the *Official Report* rather than by referring to press statements.

The Prime Minister: It is for Ministers attending each Council to decide how best to inform Parliament of the results. I would expect that they would normally find that a full statement in the *Official Report* is the most appropriate way of doing this. Different arrangements may, however, be appropriate for Councils which take place during the recess—as was the case in the instance which I understand the hon. Member has in mind.

Falkland Islands

Dr. Godman asked the Prime Minister if it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to second Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or DAFS fisheries protection service personnel to the Falkland Islands Government in order to assist the latter in the establishment of a fisheries protection service.

The Prime Minister: Three inspectors of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's sea fisheries inspectorate will be seconded to the Falkland Islands Government to assist in the establishment and initial operation of the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone.

Prisoners of War

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister when she received letters from Mr. Arthur Christie of Bryncir, Garndolbenmaen, Gwynedd, dated 24 September and 26 Octoer, concerning the plight of former Japanese prisoners of war who suffered experimentation at unit 731 during their captivity; and if she will now reply to these letters.

The Prime Minister: The letters which Mr. Arthur Christie wrote on 24 September and 24 October concerning former Japanese prisoners of war were received on 30 September and 28 October respectively, and their receipt acknowledged by my office. Both letters were referred to the Ministry of Defence, which has been investigating this matter. This has necessarily been a time-consuming task involving the examination of records and

research into the events of over 40 years ago. However, these inquiries are now nearly complete and the Ministry of Defence expects to reply shortly.

Official Functions

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister how many official conferences, receptions, dinners, lunches and other gatherings have taken place in the United Kingdom in consequence of the British presidency of the EEC; where these events have taken place; what has been the cost to public funds; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As of 4 November, 50 official meetings (of which nine at ministerial level), four receptions, 18 dinners and 57 lunches have taken place in the United Kingdom in consequence of our presidency of the EC. The majority have taken place in London. Meetings have also taken place in Hertfordshire, the Lake District, Somerset, Oxford, Glasgow, Surrey, Edinburgh, Broadway and Gleneagles. The additional costs to public funds of these events on the basis of accounts settled so far is estimated at approximately £323,000.

Engagements

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

Mr. Wallace asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

Mr. Dixon asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

Mr. Flannery asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Parental Leave

Mr. Welsh asked the Prime Minister why the United Kingdom Government again blocked the passage of the European Communities directive on parental leave.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the replies which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on 18 December 1985, at column 188, and to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) on 25 June 1986, at columns 157-58.

TRANSPORT

Severn and Wye Crossings

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport when tenders were invited for the major contract for repair work on the Severn bridge and Wye bridge; what is the closing date for applications; when the work is likely to commence; and by what date it is expected that the work will be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tenders for the major strengthening contract for the Severn crossing were invited on 17 October 1986. The closing date for return of tenders is 9 February 1987.

Work is likely to begin in April-May 1987. The tender specifies the works are to be completed two years after the date of their commencement. This strengthening work will be followed by complete resurfacing of the crossing, which is expected to be spread over a further two years.

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport when tenders are to be invited for the building of a second Severn crossing.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Many detailed investigations and consultations still have to be carried out before construction tenders can be invited. It is too early to fix a date for inviting tenders. We wish to be in a position to provide the second Severn crossing by the mid-1990s, if the build-up of traffic needs it and Parliament so decides.

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he proposes to ensure that local firms and local labour are fully utilised in the contract work *(a)* for the major repair work on the existing crossing over the Wye and Severn and *(b)* for the construction of a second Severn crossing.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When tenders for any major road contract are invited, the Department issues notices in the technical press giving brief details of the nature of the works, to inform potential subcontractors or material suppliers. This is being done in the case of the major contract for strengthening the Severn crossing. It is too early to do this for the construction of the second Severn crossing. The final selection of subcontractors, labour, material suppliers and so on is a matter for the decision of the tenderers.

Inter-City Services

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will discuss, at his next meeting with the chairman of British Rail, the punctuality of Inter-City rail services, with particular reference to the London Euston-Birmingham New Street services; and if he will ensure that British Rail makes available detailed statistics regarding the above.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. We have asked British Rail to report performance against the punctuality standards for Inter-City services in its next annual report and accounts.

Fishing Industry

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the carrying of immersion suits on United Kingdom registered fishing vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am not aware of any specific representations recently. The carriage of immersion suits on United Kingdom fishing vessels was of course one of a number of safety requirements put forward by hon. Members during the passage of what is now the Safety at Sea Act 1986, but not included in the Act. Nevertheless, the carriage of lifesaving appliances on fishing vessels is currently under examination by the Department in consultation with the fishing industry as part of the review of the Fishing Vessel (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many United Kingdom registered fishing vessels were lost in *(a)* 1982, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1984, *(d)* 1985 and *(e)* the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number and nature of casualties to fishing vessels are published in the Department's annual return "Casualties to Vessels and Accidents to Men". The following table sets out the figures of total losses of fishing vessels for the years 1982 to 1985 and also includes a provisional figure for the first six months of 1986.

Fishing Vessels
Total lost

Year	*Number*
1982	50
1983	43
1984	41
1985	40
1986	7

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many fishermen lost their lives whilst employed on United Kingdom registered fishing vessels in *(a)* 1982, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1984, *(d)* 1985 and *(e)* the first six months of 1986.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The following table sets out the information required for the years 1982-85 and also includes the first six months of 1986.

Fishing Vessels

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Deaths from Casualties to Vessels	0	14	10	15	3
Deaths from Other Causes except disease	17	7	3	7	2
Total	17	21	13	22	5

Manchester (Bus Deregulation)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he or any of the Ministers in his Department will make an official visit to Manchester to see at first hand the effects of bus deregulation on passengers in the conurbation.

Mr. Moore: My colleagues and I have no immediate plans to visit Manchester, though I visited the area recently and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be meeting representatives of the passenger transport authority shortly.

A1 (Road Works)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the northbound carriageway of the A1 from Felton to Deanmoor remained closed by cones on the afternoon of Friday 31 October when the carriageway was entirely unobstructed by maintenance works or vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The carriageway remained closed on 31 October to allow the reinstatement of cats eyes and white lining, which was essential before the carriageway could be safely reopened to traffic. These works were required following the resurfacing of the carriageway. The northbound carriageway is now open. The whole contract is expected to be completed about one month ahead of schedule.

Road Accident Remedial Work

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, following the recent seminar on road accident remedial work organised by his Department's Greater London roads and traffic division, his other regional offices have any plans to organise similar events.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following the success of the recent seminar on road accident remedial work held in London, a similar event will be held in the west midlands early next year.

Traffic Flows, Islington

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the traffic flow figures for *(a)* northbound and *(b)* southbound traffic day and night for (i) Archway road, (ii) upper Holloway road and (iii) St. Paul's road for the latest available date; and what were the equivalent figures for *(x)* 1985, *(y)* 1984 and *(z)* 1983.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am investigating whether this information can be extracted for the hon. Member.

East London Road Assessment Study

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consultation there will be with *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* local groups after the publication of the east London road assessment study.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: They will be able to obtain copies of the first stage report when it has been published and to offer their comments.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the east London road assessment study will be published.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) on 27 October, at column *40*.

Ridgeway (Berkshire)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any representation from the Countryside Commission to make a traffic regulation order banning motor vehicles from the byway section of the Ridgeway west of Streatley in Berkshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. My right hon. Friend is currently considering its request to him to exercise his powers under section 22 of the Road Traffic Regulation

Act 1984 to prohibit certain classes of motor traffic from parts of the Ridgeway on Sundays and bank holidays from 1 May to 31 October each year. He is currently considering whether to make an order. Should he decide to do so, the proposals would be advertised in the usual way inviting views.

Passenger Transport Undertakings

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to require all passenger transport undertakings to publish timetables and make copies available to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I do not believe that it would be appropriate to introduce further legislation, since county councils and passenger transport authorities (through passenger transport executives) already have powers under the Transport Act 1985 to publish timetables, and take other steps they consider appropriate to promote the availability of public transport services in their area. It is also in the interests of transport operators to make sure that the public know of the services they are providing.

Mr. Thurhnam asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to permit him to institute an inquiry into whether a passenger transport undertaking is providing a full and proper passenger transport service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. It is for bus operators in both the public and the private sector to take their own decisions about what services they wish to provide on a commercial basis. In addition to that, local authorities, including passenger transport authorities, have a duty to secure the provision of additional services when they believe that they are in the public interest.

Motorway Rest and Picnic Areas

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to the provision of motorway rest and picnic areas, in addition to motorway service areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consideration has been given to providing separate rest and picnic facilities. The costs are high and are unlikely to be offset by income from traders. It is preferable to provide full motorway service areas, with facilities for rest and picnics, at about 30-mile intervals. Our programme is for 20 new MSAs in addition to the 40 already opened.

A3 Guildford

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce acoustic walls along *(a)* upgraded trunk routes in general or *(b)* the A3 where it passes by Guildford; if he will make it his policy to install such walls where the road in question passes within 100ft of a dwelling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: It will continue to be my Department's policy to take appropriate noise protection measures where traffic on newly constructed or improved roads will cause traffic noise to rise above specified levels.

In the case of the new section of the A3 at Guildford opened in 1981 substantial lengths of earth mounds were constructed on both sides, and acoustic secondary glazing was provided for the dwellings which qualified. I have no plans for further barriers at Guildford.

It would be unrealistic to expect that financial resources will be available to meet all demands for ameliorative works on roads which have become more intensively used.

Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many local authorities have exercised a right of appeal to him pursuant to section 39(5) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984; and if he will list them and the outcome of the appeal.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the last 12 months, four authorities have exercised their right of appeal:

Authority appealing	*Authority whose decision appealed against*	*Outcome*
Reading Borough Council	Berkshire County Council	Not yet decided
Winchester City Council	Hampshire County Council	Not yet decided
West Wiltshire District Council	Wiltshire County Council	Not yet decided
Wirral Borough Council	Merseyside County Council	Appeal allowed by Secretary of State

NORTHERN IRELAND

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many areas have been listed as special protection areas in Northern Ireland under article 4 of the European Community directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds; and how many additional areas in the Province have been identified as meeting criteria for listing under the directive.

Mr. Needham: None.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many areas have been listed to date in Northern Ireland under the Ramsar convention; and how many additional areas have been identified as meeting criteria for listing under that convention.

Mr. Needham: One area has been listed; Lough Neagh-Lough Beg. Two additional areas have been identified; Lough Foyle and Strangford Lough.

WALES

Historic Monuments

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many scheduled monument consent applications have been received by Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments) since they came into existence; and how many of these have been determined;

(2) what is the estimated average length of time for the determination of scheduled monument consent applications by Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments) since its formation.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Since the formation of Cadw, 154 applications for scheduled monument consent have

been received, of which 110 have been finalised. The estimated average time taken to determine those applications was 23 weeks. Following the provision of additional staffing resources in Cadw, the average time taken to determine such applications in 1986 has been 14 weeks.

Planning Applications

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will detail those individual planning applications refused by the Dinefwr borough council that have later been approved by himself after an inquiry, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Planning appeals allowed following public local inquiries in Dinefwr borough during each of the past five years are:

1982 Nil
1983 Light Industrial Use, Valcon Furniture Centre, Betws
1984 Off-road Driving Tuition Centre, Ffarmers, Llanwrda
1985 Motel and Restaurant, 45-56A High Street, Ammanford
1985 Light fabrication and welding unit, Dyffryn Pool, Ammanford
1985 Light Industrial Use, Lloyd Street, Ammanford
1985 6 caravans, The Fairground, Station Road, Brynamman
January-November 1986 Nil.

These cases were each decided by an inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the Government's plans for expenditure on education and science from 1987-88 to 1989-90.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: 1. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his statement today, provision for education and science in 1987-88 will be £16,599 million. This total is £2,280 million higher than the plans for 1986-87 published in the 1986 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702).

LOCAL AUTHORITY CURRENT EXPENDITURE

2. The Total provided for local authority current expenditure on education in 1987-88 in the Government's plans is £12,850 million, 18·8 per cent. more in cash than the plans for 1986-87 set out in Cmnd. 9702. These figures include the sum of £460 million for England which the Government are ready to add to planned expenditure in 1987-88 in return for a salary structure and a definition of duties for school teachers which meet the requirements set out in my statement of 30 October. This total represents what local education authorities are expected to spend if they maintain their present policies and keep increases in their costs, other than school teacher pay, to the level of cost increases in the economy as a whole.

3. There remain many opportunities to raise the efficiency of the service. The Government believe that, if these were seized, LEAs could make good progress with national and local policies for improving the quality of education at a lower level of expenditure. The total used for determining the education component of the grant related expenditure (GRE) has therefore been set at £500 million lower than the total for expenditure provision. The margin between the two totals is allocated to education in the Government's plans, but is not carried through to the control totals for the GRE.

4. With the inclusion of the planned additions for teacher pay, the Government is planning for an increase of 1·5 per cent. in real terms in local authority spending on education in 1988-89, and broadly level funding in 1989-90. Within the totals planned for local authority expenditure as a whole in each year, the Government will in 1987 review the distribution of expenditure between services (including education) in the light of local authorities' budgets for 1987-88, the Government's priorities and other factors.

Schools

5. Overall, school rolls continue to fall. Local education authorities are on course to achieve the target of removing 1,125,000 surplus school places by March 1987. The next few years offer a unique opportunity to rationalise and improve the pattern of secondary schools. The Government expect authorities to remove just over half a million surplus places in the three years 1987-88 to 1989-90, mainly from the secondary sector. My Department will issue towards the end of the year fresh guidance on the opportunities for further improving the quality of provision.

6. The plans assume that authorities will secure a further reduction in the number of school teachers they employ, but that the overall pupil-teacher ratio, currently at its best ever level, will continue to improve each year.

7. The Government attach importance to an improvement in the condition of school buildings and to a better supply of books and equipment in the classroom. Accordingly, the plans allow for a higher programme of repairs and maintenance, and increased expenditure on the purchase of books and equipment. The task of equipping schools for the new examination for the General Certificate of Secondary Education has been fully allowed for. As a contribution to greater efficiency, the Government expect authorities to cut the net costs of the school meals service and the costs of caretaking and cleaning, and to moderate the cost of their own administration.

Non-advanced further education

8. The Government's plans should enable authorities to respond to changes in demand for NAFE provision and in the nature of the student population. There are uncertainties about future student numbers, particularly in later years, but the plans allow for a higher proportion of 16 to 19-year-olds, in particular, to attend college.

9. The overall student-staff ration (SSR) for NAFE tightened slightly between 1984-85 and 1985-86, from 8·6:1 to 8·8:1, something over 2 per cent. I look for further tightening in the interests of greater efficiency; the plans imply that the SSR figure will be raised by around a further 3 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1987-88, reaching 9:1 in the 1987-88 academic year. The Government's expenditure plans assume that the number of lecturers in NAFE will continue to reduce by 3 per cent. annually, to reach an SSR of 9·4:1 or 9·5:1 in 1989-90, depending on student numbers. SSR targets for the longer term are, however, under review in a joint study with the local authority associations.

In-service training

10. Following the passage of the Education (No. 2) Act

1986, the plans provide for a new scheme for in-service training of teachers and lecturers to support expenditure of up to £200 million in 1987-88. The scheme will support national and local priorities. Included in the former is training for the GCSE. The new arrangements should help to promote expansion and more systematic and purposeful planning of in-service training. They will be evaluated to ascertain how far training programmes contribute to the more effective and efficient delivery of the education service.

Education Support Grants (ESGs)

11. The education support grants programme enters its third year in 1987-88. In that year there will be a programme of 20 activities of national priority at a cost of £92 million, to be supported by grant of £64 million. This year, as last, all LEAs have accepted te invitation to bid and I hope to announce allocations for individual LEAs in December. The programme includes support for schemes for the supervision of school pupils at midday (£39 million of expenditure) and for the provision of books and equipment for the GCSE (£10 million).

Advanced Further Education

12. Following consultation with the local authority associations I intend to determine the basic quantum of advanced further education (AFE) expenditure within the predetermined pool in 1987-88 at £701·5 million, including £1·5 million for recurrent expenditure by local authority institutions taking part in the engineering and technology programme. This figure has been set so as to sustain access to AFE at its present level. I have made available a further £15 million for selective allocation in support of initiatives of high priority, including measures to improve the supply of teachers in mathematics, physics and technology. With this addition the total represents an increase of £55·5 million over the 1986-87 quantum.

13. The plans for 1987-88 assume the achievement of a student to staff ratio of 12:1 and allow for some increase in provision for non-teaching costs compared to 1986-87.

14. The National Advisory Body is considering how the basic quantum should be distributed between authorities and how the £15 million addition should be deployed. I shall decide on the allocation of both elements of the quantum later in the year, in the light of the NAB's advice.

VOTE EXPENDITURE

15. Vote expenditure in 1987-88 is planned to be £3,749 million, £245 million higher than the plans for 1986-87 published in Cmnd. 9702. Within this total, recurrent grant to the universities will increase by £95 million and the science budget by £39 million between 1986-87 and 1987-88. The Government's plans also include increases in provision for local authority and voluntary school capital expenditure, for the assisted places scheme as it builds up to its planned size, and for the funding of the initial costs of city technology colleges.

Universities

16. On 20 May (*Official Report*, c. 179-80) my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) said that the Government's willingness to provide additional funding for the universities would depend crucially on evidence of real progress in the development of the policy of selectivity, the rationalisation of small departments, better financial management and improved standards of teaching. I have now been able to agree with the University Grants Committee and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals a major programme of work in these areas. Details are set out in letters from the chairmen of the two organisations which I am publishing today in the *Official Report*. I shall expect individual universities to co-operate fully and positively in this programme. Progress will be closely monitored, and the future funding of the universities will depend significantly upon its implementation year by year.

17. In the light of that agreement, the Government have decided to provided an additional £61 million for recurrent and equipment grant for the universities in the financial year 1987-88, compared with previously planned expenditure, and a corresponding addition of £71 million in 1988-89. Between the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 recurrent grant will increase in cash by £95 million or 7·2 per cent.

18. Subject to parliamentary approval, recurrent grant for the universities on the UGC list for the 1987-88 academic year will be £1,432 million. To the extent that the 1987-88 academic year falls partly in the 1988-89 financial year the grant is subject to review in the normal way. Recurrent grant for the 1986-87 academic year will be increased from £1,341 million to £1,365 million. The new level of grant for the Open University will be announced shortly.

19. General equipment grant for the universities for the academic year 1987-88 will be £111·6 million — an increase of £6·5 million over 1986-87. This now includes the separate provision of £10 million made in earlier years for the selective enhancement of research equipment, which has been consolidated into the general equipment grant.

20. Within the increased amounts of recurrent grant I expect the UGC to make provision for a number of particular improvements, including:

- redundancy and premature retirement and other costs to facilitate rationalisation and the recruitment of new, young academic staff;
- essential repairs and maintenance of plant and buildings;
- increases in library purchasing;
- special initiatives in teacher training to help deal with the teacher shortfall in mathematics, physics and technology; and
- the expansion of continuing education.

21. I have welcomed the universities' proposals for changes in the structure of academic pay. I shall be willing to provide some further additional funding for pay restructuring if structural improvements can be agreed at a cost that can be afforded, and I shall be initiating discussions to that end accordingly.

Science

22. The science budget, from which the research councils receive their grants in aid, will be £654 million in 1987-88, an increase of £39 million over provision in 1986-87. The figure is £24 million higher than the plans for 1987-88 published in cmnd 9702. The science budget in 1988-89 will be £664 million, an increase over previous plans of £20 million, and in 1989-90 £680 million. These sums will be distributed following advice from the ABRC.

Voluntary Colleges

23. Following consultations with the Voluntary Sector Consultative Council I have determined the quantum of AFE expenditure at voluntary colleges grant-aided solely by my Department at £48·85 million, an increase of £3·45 million over that for 1986-87. As with maintained AFE,

this will allow the voluntary colleges to participate in the initiative to establish new courses for teachers of shortage subjects. I shall decide its distribution between the colleges later this year in the light of the NAB's advice.

Student Awards

24. Provision for student awards allows for a small increase in the number of mandatory award-holders. Details of new rates of award and revised contribution scales will be announced later. Provision is also made for the basic tuition fee for courses eligible for mandatory awards to increase from £536 to £556 in line with the Government's forecast of general inflation. A comprehensive review of all aspects of financial support for students studying at first degree or equivalent level is in progress.

Local Authority and Voluntary School Capital Expenditure

25. Provision for local authority capital expenditure on education in 1987-88 will be £364 million, an increase of £56 million over the plans for 1986-87 published in Cmnd. 9702. The Department will be writing to local education authorities to inform them of their allocations for capital expenditure within the education block. In addition to those allocations, which will be in total at the same level as in 1986-87, local authorities have spending power derived from capital receipts; that spending power is increasing and will enable gross expenditure on education to be substantially greater than the level of allocations. The total available for allocations to local education authorities for 1988-89 and 1989-90 will be considered in the light of later estimates of spending power from receipts and other factors.

26. Provision for capital grants in 1987-88 to voluntary-aided and special agreement schools, which have no supplementary spending powers, has been increased by about £8·5 million compared with previous plans.

City Technology Colleges

27. My plans provide for the establishment of city technology colleges. The promoters will be expected to meet all, or a substantial part, of the capital costs but will receive a grant related to the number of pupils and sufficient to meet all items of current expenditure which would fall on an LEA for a school which it maintains.

Letters from the CVCP and UGC

28. The texts of the letters from the CVCP and UGC referred to above are as follows:

From the Chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals

5 November 1986

Dear Secretary of State

1. The acute difficulties of the universities result from the stark fact that the recurrent grant has fallen by one fifth in real terms since 1980-81 and that if existing policies were to be continued further substantial reductions would lie ahead. My Committee therefore welcomed your predecessor's announcement on 20 May, which you later endorsed, that the Government was ready to consider with the UGC and ourselves some further financial provision for the universities in 1987-88 and the following years. Sir Keith Joseph also said that the Government's willingness to make such provision depended on evidence of progress in implementing and building on the changes which he believed were needed. Particular areas which he mentioned were selectivity, rationalisation, better financial management and improved standards of teaching.

2. After the discussions that have taken place during the summer, it has been agreed that both the Chairman of the UGC and myself as Chairman of the CVCP, should write to you about action which has already been taken or is in contemplation. The division of labour in our complementary letters is a natural one, given our different roles. Consultation between the two bodies is close but some of the areas at issue are clearly the primary concern of the UGC. Others, for example, staff development and appraisal, mainly lie with the CVCP. The Committee has already taken action on most of these issues; the other matters dealt with in this letter are under consideration.

Academic Quality and Standards

3. The maintenance of high academic standards is central to the operation of all universities. The CVCP established in 1983 a group under the chairmanship of Professor Philip Reynolds which was charged with the task of offering advice and guidance to the universities on the maintenance and monitoring of academic quality and standards. The resulting paper "Academic Standards in Universities" has recently been published and commended by the CVCP to all universities. It stressed that quality and standards are best ensured when institutions carry the greatest possible responsibility themselves for these matters, a view that has been endorsed by the Government in its welcome for the report. "Accademic Standards in Universities" includes:

(i) codes of practice on
- external examining
- postgraduate training and research admissions, supervision and examinations
- appeals procedure at postgraduate research degree level

(ii) a paper on external involvement in the maintenance and monitoring of academic standards

(iii) a paper on university internal procedures for the maintenance and monitoring of academic standards.

4. The CVCP also accepts the Reynolds' conclusion that assurance about quality and standards requires close, detailed and continuous scrutiny. To this end it has already stated its intention to keep under review the implementation of the codes and papers outlined above with a view to issuing from time to time further reports and advice. The aim is to publish a report by July 1987 based on information from individual universities on the extent to which they are following practice consistent with that advice and how they intend to modify their practice if necessary, in the light of the advice offered. A further report will be published by July 1988 on the changes that have been made. If it appeared necessary, further advice on guidance identifying best practices, particularly to ensure the effective review of the standards of courses, would then be issued to universities in the course of the following year. Comparisons of teaching quality across and within institutions are not easily made. Systems of staff appraisal and development (considered below) can however help considerably in the establishment and maintenance of the high academic quality of which universities are justifiably proud.

Staff Performance and Development

5. The Committee circulated in April 1986 a draft code of practice on academic staff development and training. Comments from universities are to be collected by December 1986 with a view to revising and promulgating the code by July 1987. The Committee will ask universities, not later than the summer of 1988, about the extent to which they have implemented the code and whether they would wish to see any further development or extension of it. The findings will be published. In its further advice on academic standards the Committee will also seek to identify best practice in teaching policies, including such matters as the range of teaching and learning methods used, the arrangements for teachers to appraise and improve their teaching skills, and methods of assessment and feedback to enable policy to be monitored and reviewed.

6. The CVCP is already committed to the principle of performance appraisal for academic and academic-related staff. Discussions are taking place in the context of negotiations with the AUT on a new pay structure, and preliminary agreement has already been reached on the principles and purposes which should underlie a scheme of staff appraisal. Some universities have already introduced such schemes. It is the firm intention of the CVCP to consult universities during the coming academic year regarding draft model guidelines for staff appraisal. After the consultation,

guidelines will be published and commended to institutions during the course of 1987. The Committee will then ask universities during the first half of 1988 for information about the extent to which appraisal systems have been introduced by them. A report on its findings will be published by July 1988.

7. A Staff Development Policy Committee, consisting of vice-chancellors, has been established to encourage and co-ordinate the work which is already in hand on staff training and development, and on apppraisal.

Selectivity and Rationalisation

8. These are matters which lie predominantly in the province of the UGC and individual universities, but consideration of principles and policies concerning them naturally form part of the consultations between the CVCP and the UGC. But the Committee plays no part in the implementation of these policies, above all as they affect individual universities.

9. Planning in universities is based on the assumption that the UGC will maintain a policy of selective research funding and that it will be reprting to ministers from time to time on the response of individual universities to selectivity and the extent to which they have deployed their own finances on a selective basis.

10. The UGC's prospective agenda for rationalisation seems likely to go beyond the consideration of small departments alone; the Committee would expect to be consulted. Meanwhile, some universities have already arranged for the transfer of staff and departments and other forms of rationalisation, and most are initiating such schemes.

Better Management

11. The Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities, under the chairmanship of Sir Alex Jarratt, reported to the CVCP and UGC in March 1985. The UGC has asked universities for a detailed account of the action that they have taken or intend to take on the Jarratt Report and has stated separately to you the further steps which it intends to take.

12. There was also published by the Committee in March 1985 "Guidance on Recommended Accounting Practice in UK Universities" with a view to the achievement of clear, comparable and consistent statements of university accounts. This initiative was supported by the Accounting Standards Committee which looked forward to the issuing of a "franked" statement of recommended practice after two years of practical experience with the present guidance and further studies on particular aspects of accounting practice. It is clear from replies to an enquiry made by the Committee earlier this year that universities have already changed the form of their annual accounts where necessary in order to conform to the guidance.

13. As a way of encouraging and assisting universities to improve their methods of financial management the Committee has recently established a group which includes members with experience of accountancy, banking, and the public service. It has the following terms of reference:

> "To consider the strategic planning and financial management procedures desirable to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of university operations, noting current best practice, and to make recommendations."

The work of the group will be an important part of the Committee's activities over the coming year and it is intended to issue a report before the end of the 1986-87 session.

14. A joint working party of the Committee and the UGC has recently produced a report on the use of performance indicators relating to both inputs and outputs in teaching and research. The report has been accepted by both Committees. The objects are to aid management, to improve accountability and to provide means of making comparisons both within and between institutions. An initial range of performance indicators has already been identified. They will be implemented during the academic year 1986-87 with regular publication covering all universities beginning before the end of 1987. Representatives of the Department of Education and Science and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils will be invited to attend meetings of a Technical Committee which is being established to effect the implementation of these indicators.

Tenure

15. The Government has recently confirmed to the CVCP its intention to introduce legislation to limit tenure when the Parliamentary time-table allows. Meanwhile the Committee has itself embarked on an investigation of the nature of appointments currently being made, and the nature of the grounds which universities see as relevant to the exercising of their powers of dismissal for "good cause". We will be reporting by December 1986. We have agreed with the UGC that during the first three months of 1987 we will consider with them how best to review with universities their policies for the terms of appointing new staff with the aim of ensuring that staff are not initially appointed with tenure in its strongest form where this can be avoided.

University salaries

16. You will know that universities face serious problems in recruiting, retaining and motivating staff. Proposals for restructuring and improving salaries to overcome these problems have been submitted to you separately.

Funding

17. In "The Future of the Universities" we stated that, "The universities accept that the very great support they now receive from taxation, and the key role which they have come to play in national development, impose duties and obligations upon them." Those obligations are primarily discharged by the maintenance of standards of excellence in teaching and research but, as this letter indicates, we also accept that they include ensuring and demonstrating that universities are run efficiently. But the Government, in its turn, must accept the obligation to keep a major national asset in good order. That obligation was clearly set out in the recommendations directed to the Government in the Report of the Jarratt Committee. Additional resources, and on a substantial scale, are required now if the country is to continue to enjoy the benefits of a university system of the highest quality.

Yours sincerely
Maurice Shock

From the Chairman of the University Grants Committee
4 November 1986

Dear Secretary of State

On 20 May your predecessor told the House of Commons that the Government was ready to consider with the UGC and the CVCP some further financial provision for the universities in 1987/88 and the following years; but that the Government's willingness to make such provision depended crucially on evidence of real progress in implementing and building upon the changes that are needed. The particular areas that he identified were selectivity, the rationalisation and, where appropriate, the closure of small departments, better financial management and improved standards of teaching. He also referred to the conditions for a new structure for academic pay. You endorsed your predecessor's statement when answering Questions in the House of Commons on 10 June.

2. You have subsequently discussed with representatives of the Committee and the CVCP the financial needs of the universities and the initiatives that are being taken. The Committee has stressed to you that both the present and the planned level of university funding as set out in this year's Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702) were inadequate and that restructuring and reshaping the system would involve additional costs. I am now writing to describe the action which the UGC is taking or plans to take in some of the areas mentioned above and also in regard to academic tenure. The Chairman of the CVCP is writing a complementary letter about other areas.

Academic Quality and Standards

Staff Performance and Development

3. You and your predecessor have both endorsed the conclusion in the CVCP Reynolds Report on "Academic Standards in Universities" that quality and standards depend on close, detailed and continuous scrutiny. The UGC supports the steps which the CVCP is taking to encourage improved arrangements for assessment of teaching quality, for academic staff training and development and for the introduction of staff appraisal.

Selectivity in Research Funding

4. The UGC intends to maintain its selective approach to the allocation of research funding, irrespective of the level of overall public support for the universities, when it makes its distribution of grant for 1987-88 to 1989-90 early next year. Universities individually need to draw up and carry out plans for the selective distribution of the resources they devote to research. The UGC will monitor their arrangements for this and will report to Ministers annually on their implementation. During the coming year the Committee will, in conjunction with the research councils, examine further the criteria used in the selective distribution of research funding. It will aim to advise Ministers on this by the end of 1987.

5. The Committee accepts that the Government will look for evidence that selective research funding, combined with the policies of the research councils, leads to better research through greater concentration of effort in strong departments. It will consider and advise Ministers by the end of 1989 on the scope for further development of its policy of selectivity in 1990-91 and thereafter.

Rationalisation

6. The Committee argued the general case for the rationalisation of small departments in its Strategy Advice in 1984. Last year it issued a letter setting out criteria on which universities should judge the effectiveness of their small departments and giving advice on the minimum size of departments in particular areas. It will continue to urge universities to review their provision and, if need be, to rationalise it. The exercises being carried out by the University of London and now by the University of Wales are major examples of internal rationalisation already undertaken on the initiative of individual institutions.

7. The Committee for its part has identified a considerable number of subject areas where, viewed in the national perspective, there is a case for a concentration of provision to strengthen teaching and research, particularly where departments are small and vulnerable and student demand is modest; or in some cases where a reduction of provision is needed to reflect limited manpower needs. It has already completed reviews of five of these areas and specific proposals for rationalisation have been or are being implemented (Pharmacy, Agriculture, Oceanography, Italian and Scandinavian Studies). Reviews of 13 more areas have been completed recently or are now in progress (Architecture, Town and Country Planning, Celtic Studies, Oriental and African Studies, Dutch, Hispanics, Classics, Economic and Social History, Librarianship and Information Studies, Drama, Earth Sciences, Material Sciences, and Teacher Education in Wales in co-operation with the WAB). There are a further 8 specific areas in which the Committee hopes to launch new reviews in the current academic year (Veterinary Studies, History and Philosophy of Science, Dentistry, small Accountancy departments, Music, Palaeontography, Archaeology and small Physics and Chemistry departments) and it plans to extend the programme thereafter. Once the Committee has completed a review it will set a timetable for the implementation of its conclusions by the institutions concerned. The rationalisation process will normally take at least five years from start to finish, largely because even after it has been agreed that a course should be closed it has to be allowed to run on until the present students have graduated.

8. In our discussions you have made it clear that the Government fully supports the UGC's plans for rationalisation even though it recognises that these will sometimes have painful consequences for institutions and individual members of staff. You have also recognised that progress in launching reviews and implementing their recommendations will depend to a large extent on the future level of recurrent grant — because, as in business, rationalisation involves extra expenditure initially—and on the level of UGC's budget for its own staff and running costs.

Better management

9. The UGC has asked universities to give a detailed account this autumn of the action they have taken or intend to take on the Jarratt Report on "Efficiency Studies in Universities" and the associated special studies, in respect of:

the roles of Councils, Senates and Vice-Chancellors

management and planning structures

activities covered by the Jarratt special studies on, for example, purchasing and building and plant maintenance.

The Committee will by July 1987 submit to Ministers a report and commentary on universities' responses and will say what action it intends to take in any cases where these appear to be unsatisfactory. It will also ask universities to submit annual reports, starting in July 1988, on the efficiency gains they have achieved.

10. The Chairman of the CVCP will be dealing with other aspects of better management in which our two bodies have been and will be working together. These include the establishment of a working party on financial management in the universities, the follow-up of the report of a joint working party on the use of performance indicators and the issue of a code of guidance on university accounting practice. The UGC will expect all universities to adhere to this code.

11. Improved financial management and accounting in universities needs to be matched by a greater capacity for financial monitoring in the UGC. Steps are being taken to ensure that the Secretariat has the necessary professional expertise for this.

Tenure

12. In our discussions you have expressed your concern that tenure continues to handicap the ability of universities to match staffing to changes in demand and to the requirements of rationalisation and research selectivity and you have confirmed that the Government plans to introduce legislation to limit tenure when the Parliamentary timetable allows. You have also explained that, although the Government recognises the difficulty which universities individually face in seeking themselves to limit tenure, it believes that, pending legislation, there is scope for more appointments to be made without grant of tenure.

13. The CVCP will be reporting by December 1986 on current practice in granting tenure university by university. When their report is available the UGC will consider with the CVCP whether and to what extent it would be appropriate to take steps to ensure that wherever possible staff are appointed without tenure and will give you its advice on this by March 1987.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Swinnerton-Dyer

School Closures

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the announced school closures for 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Dunn: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools with fewer than 20 students on roll remains open.

Mr. Dunn: The number of maintained schools in England in January 1986 with fewer than 20 pupils on roll was 128.

Nursery Classes (Avon)

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in each sector within the county of Avon do not have provision for nursery classes.

Mr. Dunn: The number of maintained primary schools in each sector in Avon in January 1986 which did not have provision for nursery classes was:

	Number of schools
Infants	65
Junior with Infants	181

	Number of schools
Junior	85
Total	331

Marbury Primary School

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the annual capital and revenue costs of maintaining and staffing the Marbury primary school for 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1985-86, and as to the capital and revenue funding for these years received from the local education authority and from his Department, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: The annual revenue costs since 1979-80 were as follows:

	£
1979-80	21,840
1980-81	28,987
1981-82	31,847
1982-83	36,491
1983-84	35,416
1984-85	41,044
1985-86	38,416

These costs were met by Cheshire LEA: the DES does not make direct payments to schools. There were no capital costs in the years shown above.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any information about the cost savings that will result from the closure of Marbury primary school at the end of the current year.

Mr. Dunn: If the proposal to close Marbury primary school is approved, the Cheshire LEA expects to make the following savings over the next four financial years:

Year	£
[1]1987-88	6,083
1988-89	22,945
1989-90	33,850
1990-91	38,044

[1] (part year)

Village Schools

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will instigate a special grant to maintain village schools in rural development areas.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no proposals to introduce a special grant to maintain village schools in rural development areas. The extra cost of schooling in sparsely populated areas is already taken into account in allocating block grant to local authorities. In addition my right hon. Friend is currently providing educational support grants to 14 local education authorities for a pilot project to explore educational and cost-effective ways of enriching the curriculum provided in small rural primary schools.

Universities (Finance)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the progress of discussions with university vice-chancellors on the action plan designed to deal with the distribution of resources to universities, with special reference to the university of Salford.

Mr. Walden: On the question of overall university funding, I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key). The distribution between institutions of the increased funds being made available is a matter for the University Grants Committee.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total Government expenditure on Dundee university from University Grants Committee grants in each year since 1981-82; what is the estimated expenditure for each year for the period 1986 to 1990; and if he will express each of these figures at constant prices.

Mr. Walden: The total of all University Grants Committee grants to Dundee university in each year since 1981-82 are shown in the table:

£'000

Financial Years	Cash	1986-87 prices
1981-82	14,292	18,365
1982-83	17,219	20,634
1983-84	18,142	20,806
1984-85	17,167	18,880
1985-86	17,759	18,425

The grants include a cash total of over £2·5 million provided over the financial years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 specifically to meet staff redundancy costs.

Total grants in the current financial year are likely to be in the region of £18·5 million.

Grants in future years will depend on both total future provision for the universities and the University Grants Committee's grant allocations to individual universities.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations have been received from the University of Oxford concerning the financing of students during the past year; what has been the nature of those representations; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Thirty representations have been received this year, counting letters from the vice-chancellor, heads of colleges, and university staff, about the financing of students. They covered a wide range of issues, and received appropriate replies.

Brent Education Authority

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish his correspondence with Brent local education authority.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not the Department's normal practice to publish correspondence with individual local education authorities. I will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the effect upon the education of school children in Brent of the two-day strike by teachers in that borough; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. I am glad, in the interests of the

children, that Brent council has decided to reinstate Miss McGoldrick, as it was asked to do by my right hon. Friend.

Teachers (Pensions)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to introduce legislation to enable the dependants of married women teachers, single women teachers and single men teachers to receive the same pension benefits as the dependants of married men teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Although a death gratuity is payable in respect of all members of the teachers superannuation scheme, family pensions, subject to completion of a minimum qualifying period, are payable automatically only on the death of a male teacher. They comprise pensions for widows or surviving children, or both. Pensions are payable to widowers, or other dependants, only if the Department has previously accepted dependency nominations in respect of them.

My right hon. Friend accepts that in family pensions as in all other aspects of teachers' superannuation there are strong arguments for equality of treatment. The Social Security Act 1986 will require him to introduce at least minimum provision for widowers' pensions. But there are cost implications. Discussion of the subject is expected to resume in the teachers superannuation working party, on which both teachers and local authorities are represented, when it meets next month.

Religious Education

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy regarding the teaching of Christian-based and biblical instruction in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Within the statutory framework for religious education laid down in the Education Act 1944 an introduction to the Christian tradition remains central to the religious education provided in our schools. Many of the central values of our society and culture are derived from religion and from Christianity in particular. A knowledge and understanding of Christian belief and practice, including biblical study, is therefore essential to an understanding of our society and its values.

ENVIRONMENT

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans any changes in his public expenditure programme.

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced the Government's public expenditure plans for the next three years. The table below gives details of the major changes in my Department's programmes. Increased receipts have enabled me to provide for carefully targeted increases in gross investment on some vital programmes at relatively small net cost.

Housing

For housing, there is a substantial increase in the gross provision for capital expenditure in 1987-88. This will now be £451 million (14 per cent.) higher than previously planned, at £3,661 million. That figure is £225 million more than the estimated outturn for 1986-87. An increase on this scale has been made possible by the success of the right to buy. Over the next three years receipts are now expected to yield some £950 million more than previously forecast.

The gross provision for local authority capital expenditure in 1987-88 will be £2,922 million an increase of £231 million over the estimated outturn for 1986-87. In using their increased resources, I look to local authorities to give first priority to the renovation and maintenance of their housing stock.

In determining the total for housing allocations to local authorities I shall take account of their growing spending power from receipts. I shall honour the assurances given by my predecessors that initial housing allocations to individual authorities for 1987-88 would be not less than 80 per cent. of their initial allocations for 1985-86.

In addition I shall be able to make significant increases to the amounts allocated to local authorities to revitalise rundown estates under schemes developed in conjunction with my Department's urban housing renewal unit. I shall also be able to increase the gross provision for the Housing corporation, particularly to support housing association schemes financed primarily by the private sector. We shall make further announcements about these shortly.

Housing investment by new towns is now increasingly confined to the servicing of sites for development by the private sector, and gross provision in 1987-88 will be more than covered by the forecast capital receipts from sales of housing and land for housing.

Provision for current expenditure in the housing programme has been increased by £131 million for 1987-88. This mainly reflects increased provision for rate fund contributions by local authorities to their housing revenue accounts, which forms part of the rate support grant settlement, and revised estimates of the cost of housing subsidy. The extra provision will also allow scope for significant new initiatives on agency services for home improvement and on housing management training.

Overall, the net housing programme for 1987-88, covering both capital and current expenditure, will increase by £361 million to £3,204 million.

For 1988-89 and 1989-90, the continuing success of the right to buy will enable further substantial increases on previously planned gross provision for capital investment. Private sector housing investment will also continue to increase. Current provision for the two years is increased for the same reasons as the increase in 1987-88. The overall net housing programme total for 1988-89 is now £3,016 million, an increase of £129 million on previous plans, and for 1989-90 is £3,091 million.

Other Environmental Services (OES)

In the other environmental services programme, provision for gross expenditure on local authority local environmental services capital in 1987-88 has been increased by £50 million to £609 million. £380 million of this is expected to be offset by capital receipts. The increase in provision will enable me to make appropriate capital allocations to local authorities, honouring the assurances given by my predecessors, while allowing authorities to use the steadily growing spending power available to them from capital receipts.

I attach high priority to tackling inner city problems. Provision for the urban group programmes is increased by £40 million a year. For 1987-88, £15 million of this will go

to establish the four new urban development corporations in Greater Manchester, Teesside, Tyne and Wear and the Black Country; and there is £25 million extra to enable LDDC to build on its success in regenerating London's docklands, which has generated nearly £1·5 billion in private sector investment commitments, and to embark on a new local road network. At the same time the resources for the other programmes in the group — the urban programme itself and derelict land reclamation — will continue at the planned level in 1987-88 and will then be kept at that level in 1988-89 and 1989-90. Resources for the introduction of urban regeneration grant will be provided within the urban programme.

I am also increasing the resources for our environmental and heritage programmes — specifically, the protection of natural habitats through the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the programmes for improving access to the countryside and providing conservation advice to farmers, landowners and voluntary groups, the provision of workshops and employment in rural areas, and repair grants for historic buildings, including churches.

The various additions to provision outlined above are partly met by increases in the capital receipts, totalling some £100 million over the three years, which we now expect from the disposal of property and development land in new towns. New investment in the new towns is fully maintained at the previously planned level. Private sector developers are taking on a larger proportion of it: the public sector resources thereby released have been retained and reallocated within the OES programme.

The English water authorities' external financing limit for 1987-88 has been increased by £14 million, to sustain the increased level of capital investment achieved in 1986-87 while keeping the cost in water charges to a reasonable level. The British Waterways Board EFL remains as planned at £45 million for 1987-88.

PSA

An additional £40 million a year is provided for the Property Services Agency for major new works, unavoidable increases in rents, and maintenance and estate rationalisation.

Overall Local Authority Expenditure in England — All Services

As regards overall local authority current expenditure, I proposed on 22 July that provision for local authority relevant current expenditure in 1987-88 be increased by £2·92 billion to £25·2 billion, and that aggregate Exchequer grant be increased by over £1 billion to £12·84 billion. I have consulted local government about my proposals for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement and will take decisions shortly.

Additional provision of £460 million and grant of £183 million will be available in 1987-88 for a teachers' pay settlement which meets the requirements set out in the statement of 30 October by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

For 1988-89 and 1989-90, provision for local authority current spending shows annual increases of 4 per cent. and 2½ per cent. respectively, allowing for the phasing-in of additional provision for teachers' pay.

As regards capital expenditure, the growth in accumulated receipts on all the services covered by the main cash limit continues to present serious problems of control. In recent years, some allowance has been made for the spending power from receipts in determining the total available for allocations, but in the event the allowance has proved inadequate and we have had repeated overspending. My colleagues and I find that unacceptable. This year, a more realistic allowance has been made for receipts which has constrained the amount available for allocations. But this will be more than offset by the growth in spending power from receipts. Overall, we have increased gross provision on the main cash limit by £660 million across the five service blocks (housing, education, transport, personal social services and other services). The revised plans allow for spending against the cash limit of almost £5 billion, an increase of £600 million on provision for 1986-87.

£ million cash
Totals may not sum due to rounding

	1986-87	*1987-88*		*1988-89*		*1989-90*
	Estimated outturn	*Cmnd. 9702, adjusted*	*Revised plan*	*Cmnd. 9702, adjusted*	*Revised plan*	*Plan*
DOE housing						
Capital:						
Gross	3,436	3,210	3,661	3,108	3,462	3,507
Receipts	−1,850	−1,481	−1,702	−1,335	−1,701	−1,706
Net	1,586	1,729	1,959	1,773	1,761	1,801
Current	1,261	1,114	1,245	1,114	1,255	1,290
DOE housing programme total	2,848	2,843	3,204	2,887	3,016	3,091
DOE other environmental services						
Local environmental service current[1]	2,534	2,414	2,613	2,414	2,695	2,763
Other local authority current	181	180	187	180	193	198
Local environmental services capital:						
Gross	923	559	609	567	567	582
Receipts	−398	−380	−380	−390	−390	−400
Net	526	179	229	177	177	182
Urban programme, DOE component	222	232	232	237	231	230

	1986-87 Estimated outturn	1987-88 Cmnd. 9702, adjusted	1987-88 Revised plan	1988-89 Cmnd. 9702, adjusted	1988-89 Revised plan	1989-90 Plan
(Total urban programme, including other departments' components)	(321)	(324)	(324)	(330)	(324)	(324)
Derelict land	84	81	81	84	81	81
Urban Development Corporations:						
London Docklands DC and Merseyside DC	90	86	111	89	138	147
New UDCs	—	—	15			
Royal parks, historic buildings, heritage	107	112	114	115	115	118
DOE administration: Environmental research	114	142	152	146	154	159
Environmental and Countryside Bodies (Development Commission, Nature Conservancy Council, Countryside Commission, Sports Council, other bodies)	120	124	132	127	135	136
Water research, other water services, Civil Defence	6	8	8	8	9	11
New Towns:						
Gross investment	84	74	74	76	[3]61	50
Receipts	−146	−110	−150	−101	−131	−134
Net[2]	−62	−35	−75	−25	−70	−83
Nationalised Industries external finance[4]	120	34	48	33	35	−13
DOE other programme total	4,071	3,557	3,847	3,585	3,894	3,928
PSA: office and general accommodation[5]	−90	−130	−90	−130	−90	−90
Total Local Authority current expenditure covering all departments' services:						
Local Authority relevant current	24,300	22,291	25,211	—	—	—
Rate fund contributions to Housing Revenue Accounts	460	330	437	—	—	—
Additional provision for teachers' pay	255	—	460		—	—
Local Authority public current	*25,015	22,621	*26,108	22,621	*27,149	27,865[6]

Notes:

[1]Excluding Urban Programme Current expenditure (£50 million a year).

[2]Negative baseline because disposal receipts now exceed the gross investment needs of the new towns programme.

[3]Reduced figure reflects the fact that an increased proportion of development expenditure in the new towns is being carried out by the private sector, reducing the public sector resource requirement.

[4]Regional Water Authorities, England, excluding MAFF drainage grants; British Waterways Board.

[5]Negative baseline because Departments' market-rent payments to PSA for accommodation exceeds PSA's costs of provision, because of properties held on Crown freehold or at low historic rent.

[6]Subject to final decisions on RSG settlement, and teachers' pay.

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to make any changes to the cash limit for class X, vote 4, Department of the Environment — other environmental services: Royal Palaces and Ancient Monuments etc.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class X, vote 4 will be increased by £1·1 million from £81,901,000 to £83,001,000. The increase will be charged to the Reserve, so it will not add to the planning total of public expenditure. The increase is the minimum necessary to cover a shortfall in receipts, due to a drop in the number of overseas visitors to the royal palaces and so on, and emergency expenditure of £100,000 following the Hampton Court palace fire.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for each county and district authority, what is the amount of rate support grant given in 1986-87, the amount it is intended to give for 1987-88 and the percentage difference.

Mr. Chope: The change in grant depends on the expenditure decision by each authority in 1986-87 and 1987-88.

I have placed in the Library figures showing the changes between provisional 1986-87 1st supplementary report grant entitlements and the 1987-88 grant entitlements implied by the provisional 1987-88 RSG settlement if *(a)* all authorities increase current expenditure in line with forecast inflation, that is 3·75 per

cent., and *(b)* authorities subject to rate and precept limitation spend at their expenditure levels and all other authorities increase current expenditure by 5·25 per cent.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what county and district local authorities in 1986-87 were protected from the effects of grant loss by the imposition of a safety net; in each instance how much that safety net was; and what percentage of the total rate support grant it formed of each relevant local authority.

Mr. Chope: I have arranged for the figures to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, for each county of district local authority, what is the effect on the rate support grant for 1987-88 of the removal of any safety net that was imposed in 1985.

Mr. Chope: Safety net multipliers determined for 1985-86 were removed in 1986-87, subject to a further safety net of 5p. There were three further stages of safety nets in 1986-87. Under the proposals published on 3 October the overall safety net multiplier determined for each authority in 1986-87 will be removed in 1987-88, subject to a 12p safety net on this and other changes in grant. Given the interaction of these various stages, it is not possible to separate out the grant effects in 1987-88 of the removal of safety nets for 1985-86.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when local authorities were told of the decision to impose a safety net in the rate support grant system in the current year; what local authorities it affects; and what is the consequence of the rate support grant settlement of each relevant authority;

(2) how the safety net which is being introduced for 1987-88 for county and district councils is calculated; and when it was decided to introduce such a safety net;

(3) how local authorities were made aware of the proposed safety netting arrangements for 1987-88 on or before 22 July 1986.

Mr. Chope: The Secretary of State's proposals for an RSG safety net were announced in his consultation paper issued on 3 October, which was sent to all authorities. The detailed arrangements for implementing the proposed net are set out in paragraph 21 of that paper, a copy of which is in the Library.

Within the fixed total of block grant available, the decision to set a safety net to protect authorities from excessive grant losses affects the grant entitlements of all local authorities. These grant entitlements, as adjusted by the safety net, are set out in the tables attached to the consultation paper.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, for each county and district local authority, assuming that each spends at the settlement assumption for 1987-88 and taking no account of possible transfers from balances, what is the estimated amount for each one of the percentage increase or decrease in the amount that needs to be raised from ratepayers.

Mr. Chope: The change in revenue to be raised from ratepayers depends on the expenditure decisions by each authority in 1986-87 and 1987-88 and the use of reserves in each year.

I have placed in the Library figures showing the change in the 1986-87 revenue to raise implied by the provisional 1986-87 1st supplementary report, and the 1987-88 revenue to raise implied by the provisional 1987-88 RSG settlement if *(a)* all authorities increase current expenditure in line with forecast inflation that is 3·75 per cent., and *(b)* authorities subject to rate and precept limitation spend at their expenditure levels and all other authorities increase current expenditure by 5·25 per cent. In areas where rateable resources are increasing, these figures overstate the implied increase in the rate poundage.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes there are for 1987-88 in the methodology of calculating grant related expenditure for county and district local authorities.

Mr. Chope: Paragraphs 13, 14 and 15 of the consultation paper issued to local authorities on 3 October contain my right hon. Friend's proposal for changes in the method of calculating grant related expenditure for 1987-88. Copies of the paper are in the Library.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, for each year since 1981 what was (i) Oxfordshire county council's net expenditure, (ii) block grant received and (iii) block grant as a percentage of net expenditure; and, in each instance, what were the mean figures for all county councils.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Block Grant as Percentage of Total Expenditure: Oxfordshire and All Shire Counties

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Oxfordshire CC						
Total Expenditure (£ million)	151·0	161·0	165·9	168·4	174·5	192·0
Block Grant (£ million)	58·1	54·0	52·9	50·6	38·7	30·5
Block Grant as percentage of total expenditure (per cent.)	38·5	33·5	31·9	30·0	22·2	15·9
All shire counties						
Total Expenditure (£ million)	8,470·0	9,054·9	9,416·8	9,529·3	9,980·7	11,012·6
Block Grant (£ million)	4,002·5	3,956·2	3,946·9	4,018·7	3,737·6	3,645·2
Block Grant as percentage of total expenditure (per cent.)	47·3	43·7	41·9	42·2	37·4	33·1

Footnote: Figures shown for years from 1981-82 to 1985-86 are from the most recent RSG supplementary report for the year in question. Figures for 1986-87 are the latest estimates.

Bathroom Fittings Industry

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Armitage Shanks Group Ltd. concerning the effects of present water byelaws on the bathroom fittings industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have received no representations from the Armitage Shanks Group Ltd. concerning water byelaws.

Council House Sales

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make an announcement about new discount levels on the sale of council houses to sitting tenants.

Mr. John Patten: The Housing and Planning Bill provides for higher discount on flats sold under the right to buy. There is no current proposal for a higher discount scale for houses. An increase in the £25,000 limit on discount is being considered, but no decision has been made.

Basildon (Housing)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing starts there have been in Basildon by the New Towns Commission and its predecessor the Basildon development corporation for each year over the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: The numbers of housebuilding starts in 1981 to 1983 reported by Basildon development corporation appear in issue 73 of "Local Housing Statistics", which is available in the Library. The corporation and the commission have reported that no starts have been made for them since 1983.

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the statistics on the number of local authority houses that are in Basildon, and the number of people on waiting lists for those houses; what information he has as to how many of these are single people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Basildon district council's housing investment programme return shows that the council owned 6,052 dwellings at 1 April 1986 and that there were 4,405 households on the waiting list at that time. Statistics about the categories of people on the list are not collected by my Department. The new town housing stock was about 15,000 in April.

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority houses have been sold to their occupiers in Basildon since the sales programme was introduced.

Mr. John Patten: Basildon district council and development corporation reported, respectively, 834 and 734 right-to-buy sales up to March 1986. In addition, they reported, respectively, 513 and 3,085 other sales to sitting tenants from April 1980 to March 1986.

Sports Council

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will express the annual sums made available to sporting organisations in the United Kingdom by the Sports Council in per capita terms relating to the estimated number of active participants in the sports concerned.

Mr. Tracey: The cost of obtaining the information in the form requested would be disproportionate. The Sports Council's annual report gives details of all grants made to governing bodies of sport. To express this in terms of per capita expenditure would not in any event be meaningful. In reaching decisions on applications for grant-aid from a recognised governing body of sport, the council is guided by the extent to which the proposals and activities concerned correspond to its own objectives, and the demonstration of need.

Rates

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the proportion of rates in Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Plymouth and Epsom, which were borne by business and commercial ratepayers, in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, and the latest date for which figures are available.

Dr. Boyson: Information for 1956, 1960 and 1970 is not readily available. Following is the available information for 1975, 1980 and 1986.

Business Rate Income as a Percentage of Total Rate Income

	1975-76	*1980-81*	*1986-87*
Manchester	54	52	57
Sheffield	52	49	49
Birmingham	52	50	50
Plymouth	37	34	32
Epsom & Ewell	27	25	27

Family Expenditure

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a table setting out the proportion of average income of a married couple with two children taken up by average local authority rates in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980 and the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) if he will publish a table setting out the proportion of average income of a married couple with two children, taken up by average council house rents in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, and the latest date for which figures are available.

Dr. Boyson: Information for 1956 and 1960 is not available.

The following are the available estimates of income and of rent and rates due on local authority dwellings occupied by households comprising a man, a woman and two children.

One Man, One Woman, Two Children Households
Local Authority Tenants[1] United Kingdom

	Average gross weekly income	*Average unrebated weekly rent and rates*	*as per cent of income*
	£	£	%
1970	31·50	3·20	10·2
1975	71·60	6·30	8·8
1980	137·00	12·40	9·0
1984	[2]159·90	23·20	14·5

Notes
[1] Figures for 1980 and 1984 include housing association tenants.
[2] Until 1983, income of those local authority tenants on supplementary benefit included assistance towards housing costs.
Source: Family Expenditure Survey.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the total number of families in bed and breakfast for each London borough for October and the equivalent date for *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1983.

Mr. Tracey: The available information is shown in the table.

The number of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at the end of June in each year

	1986	*1985*	*1984*	*1983*
Inner London				
City	0	1	0	0
Camden	n/a	n/a	n/a	260
Hackney	450	n/a	197	n/a
Hammersmith	n/a	n/a	77	60
Haringey	307	118	69	53
Islington	80	47	0	1
Kensington and Chelsea	n/a	14	15	8
Lambeth	n/a	172	88	144
Lewisham	n/a	32	39	n/a
Newham	n/a	n/a	n/a	6
Southwark	133	42	13	0
Tower Hamlets	n/a	n/a	209	n/a
Wandsworth	185	103	79	23
Westminster	331	115	77	101
Outer London				
Barking and Dagenham	n/a	0	0	0
Barnet	3	3	2	0
Bexley	n/a	22	9	3
Brent	689	722	583	442
Bromley	0	0	0	0
Croydon	0	0	0	0
Ealing	117	134	127	116
Enfield	137	8	21	5
Greenwich	0	0	0	0
Harrow	42	51	37	33
Havering	n/a	0	0	0
Hillingdon	n/a	66	54	n/a
Hounslow	55	48	61	61
Kingston upon Thames	85	81	68	19
Merton	n/a	2	0	10
Redbridge	0	0	0	0
Richmond upon Thames	20	5	1	0
Sutton	30	44	19	39
Waltham Forest	n/a	0	n/a	0

n/a = Not available.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, when his Department will have completed its research into the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for the homeless; and when he intends to publish the findings and recommendations.

Mr. Tracey: Results of the Department's study of the operation by local authorities of part III of the Housing Act 1985 will become available during 1987. Publication will follow as appropriate.

Tenants' Rights

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered the conclusion of the housing research group's report on "The 1980 Tenants' Rights in Practice", a copy of which has been sent to him; what is his Department's response to the report's findings; and what is his Department's response to the report's recommendations for action by central Government to seek to ensure more effective implementation of the Housing Act 1980 tenants' charter.

Mr. Tracey: The housing research group of the City University carried out the research reported in its new book, "The 1980 Tenants' Rights in Practice" under contract to the Department during 1981-83. We have considered the researchers' main conclusion: that local authorities' poor implementation has limited the impact of these rights. Since the research was completed three years ago we have continued to inform tenants of their rights (and extended them in the Housing and Building Control Act 1984) and we have revised and reprinted our booklet about the tenants' charter, which is made freely available to tenants. We are also promoting among local authorities more responsive, locally based approaches to housing management involving greater tenant participation.

Pollution

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to determine the appeal by Downton Tannery Ltd. under section 39 of the Control of Pollution Act lodged on 24 June 1985.

Mr. Waldegrave: The appeal is still under consideration by my right hon. Friend, but a decision will be announced as soon as possible.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to introduce legislation requiring all petrol stations to supply lead-free petrol.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I explained in answer to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) on 23 June, at column 3, the Government intend that there should be at least a minimum network at petrol stations offering unleaded petrol in 1987, building up to wider availability by October 1989.

Since then unleaded petrol has become available at over 170 petrol stations across the country. This is a good start, and the Government hope that this growth will continue by voluntary action by the industry, but we have not ruled out taking measures to require the provision of unleaded petrol in garages above a particular size if this proves necessary.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to ensure that the covenant of the former Greater London council remains marketable and enforceable on the expiry of the function of the London residuary body in the context of fully repairing and insuring leases and rent guarantees.

Mr. Chope: The London residuary body is required to make proposals to the Secretary of State by 1 April 1990, in accordance with section 67 of the Local Government Act 1985, as to the completion of its work and as to the transfer or disposal of its remaining functions, property, rights and liabilities.

Houses (Multiple Occupation)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the conclusions of the physical and social survey of sample houses in multiple occupation carried out on behalf of his Department.

Mr. Tracey: We hope to publish the report around the end of this year.

Thamesdown Borough Council

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why the grant-related expenditure for Thamesdown borough council was reduced by 1·9 per cent. between 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

New Towns (Finance)

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes any adjustment to the new towns cash limit in 1986-87.

Mr. John Patten: The cash limit is currently £−85·7 million and is being adjusted to £−95·7 million in the light of an increase in the receipts which are forecast for this year.

Grant-related Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish *(a)* the total current expenditure and *(b)* total capital expenditure of each residuary body in 1986-87

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *392*]: Information about residuary bodies' actual income and expenditure will not be available until after the end of the financial year. I shall in due course issue directions to residuary bodies concerning their statements of accounts for 1986-87. These statements must be submitted to me and I shall lay them before Parliament in accordance with part VIII of the Local Government Act 1985.

The estimated rate-borne expenditure of the residuary bodies as notified to rating authorities for the purpose of the 1986-87 levies is as follows:

Residuary Body	*£000*
London	48,171
Greater Manchester	8,438
Merseyside	7,000
South Yorkshire	4,000
Tyne and Wear	2,500
West Midlands	2,647
West Yorkshire	2,262

In addition, certain items of revenue expenditure, notably on compensation for staff made redundant at abolition, may be financed from inherited revenue balances or capital receipts.

For the most part, residuary bodies incur capital expenditure on discharging contractual liabilities inherited from the abolished councils. Their estimated gross capital expenditure, as notified to my Department on the capital estimates and commitments return 1986-87 at the beginning of the year is as follows:

Residuary Body	*£000*
London	69,631
Greater Manchester	650
Merseyside	2,819
South Yorkshire	708
Tyne and Wear	3,150
West Midlands	
West Yorkshire	600

These estimates do not take into account the effect of off-setting capital receipts which cannot reliably be estimated, or of transfers during the year to successor authorities of undischarged liabilities.

Dr Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the relevant, total, current and grant-related expenditure of local authorities in total at plan-budget and at all later stages in each year from 1981-82 to 1987-88 (est).

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *392*]: The information is as follows:

Relevant, total, current and grant related expenditure—all English Authorities

	Relevant Expenditure	*Total Expenditure*	*Current Expenditure*	*Grant-Related Expenditure*
1981-82				
Settlement	18,423	N/A	16,180	16,982
Budget	20,071	N/A	17,534	17,203
Revised Budget[1]	20,078	N/A	17,507	17,203
Revised Estimates[2]	20,047	N/A	17,521	17,203
Outturn	19,933	N/A	17,472	17,194

	Relevant Expenditure	Total Expenditure	Current Expenditure	Grant-Related Expenditure
1982-83				
Settlement	20,463	18,515	18,000	18,515
Budget	21,942	19,947	19,260	18,401
Revised Estimates[2]	21,717	19,699	19,231	18,401
Outturn	21,765	19,737	19,051	18,358
1983-84				
Settlement	22,307	20,134	19,692	19,230
Budget	23,070	20,905	20,550	19,230
Revised Estimates[2]	23,006	20,788	20,451	19,230
Outturn[3]	23,082	20,881	20,389	19,230
1984-85				
Settlement	22,883	20,542	20,389	19,882
Budget	23,801	21,390	21,446	19,882
Revised Estimates[2]	23,892	21,342	21,620	19,882
Outturn[3]	23,872	21,285	21,529	19,900
1985-86				
Settlement	24,161	21,815	21,314	21,221
Budget	24,391	22,012	22,397	21,240
Revised Estimates[2]	24,260	21,849	22,530	21,240
Outturn[3]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1986-87				
Settlement	25,328·5	22,790	22,253·5	22,790
1987-88				
Settlement[4] (provisional estimates)	27,679	24,638	25,211	23,714

Notes

[1] revised budgets were requested by the Secretary of State in June 1981

[2] revised estimates of budgets; these are produced each year when authorities submit budget returns for the latest financial year

[3] based on latest information available as included in latest supplementary reports

[4] as given in a grants working group consultation paper on the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88.

Council House Sales

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department is carrying out on council tenants' attitudes towards the right to buy in its preparation for national publicity on the increased discounts which will be available for sitting tenants to buy their council home if the Housing and Planning Bill becomes law; whether he intends to publish the findings and recommendations; what is his Department's budget for this research, and for this national publicity.

Mr. Tracey The Department has commissioned an independent research company to conduct a brief study into the level of awareness of the right to buy among council tenants in different parts of the country. The study is limited in scope and is designed to assist the Department to inform tenants as effectively as possible of their new rights once the Housing and Planning Bill has become law early next year. As such, the findings of the survey will not be of general interest and there is presently no intention to publish them. The current estimated cost of the study is just under £40,000. Details of our proposed campaign to inform tenants of the changes in the law have not yet been fully worked out, but the budget for the exercise is likely to be in the region of £0·5 million.

THE ARTS

Value Added Tax

Mr. Andrew Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from members of the Museums and Galleries Commission and the National Art Collections Fund in respect of harmonisation of value added tax in the European Economic Community as applied to works of art; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have received representations from a number of sources, including the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission, the director of the National Art Collections Fund and representatives of the fine arts trade, on the draft seventh directive on harmonisation of VAT in the European Community. Questions relating to VAT are, of course, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the first instance. I should, however, like to reassure the hon. Member that no decisions on new Community measures in respect of VAT and works of art are imminent.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

11. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to review the administration of mortgage interest tax relief.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The administration of mortgage tax relief by the Inland Revenue was the subject of a report by the National Audit Office last April, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Monetary Policy

12. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress of United Kingdom monetary policy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Our policy continues to be to maintain monetary conditions that exert steady downward pressure on inflation.

The Economy (Management)

15. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the management of the economy following his recent Mansion House speech.

Mr. Lawson: The usual variety.

Keith Report

16. **Mr. Stern** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to implement any further proposals of the Keith report, relating to enforcement powers for the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Brooke: This matter is under careful consideration following recent consultations.

Furnished Property (Landlords)

17. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to amend the treatment for capital and income tax purposes of landlords who let and dispose of furnished property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We have at present no plans to do so.

Exchange Rates

18. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current sterling exchange rate.

Mr. Lawson: At noon today the sterling index stood at 69·4.

29. **Mr. Alton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his financial policy includes a target range for sterling against the United States dollar and the deutschmark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No.

52. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure the stability of the sterling exchange rate.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend will continue to pursue prudent economic policies, designed to achieve stable, non-inflationary growth, and encourage other countries to do the same.

53. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what proportion the value of the pound sterling has fallen against that of the United States dollar, the West German deutschmark, the French franc and the Italian lira in the last 12 months.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The percentage change in the value of sterling between end-October 1985 and end-October 1986 against other currencies was as follows:

	Per cent.
US dollar	−2·5
Deutschmark	−23·1
French franc	−17·6
Italian lira	−21·1

34. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for producing greater stability for exchange rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend will continue to pursue prudent economic policies, designed to achieve stable non-inflationary growth, and encourage other countries to do the same.

Value Added Tax

19. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the Government's defence in respect of the infraction proceedings under the European Economic Community sixth directive on value added tax on new building.

Mr. Brooke: No. In accordance with the normal practice in infraction proceedings we do not propose to publish our defence in the zero rates case.

22. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about the collection of value added tax from small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: We have received a number of representations covering the whole range of value added tax. I welcome the recent publication by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of a consultation paper "VAT: Small Business Review" which contains a package of proposals to help small businesses.

I am anxious to press on with these proposals and am therefore asking for all comments to be sent to Customs by 31 December so that decisions can be taken in good time for the 1987 Finance Bill.

24. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the operation of the penalties contained in the Finance Act 1985 concerning value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. The White Paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794) contains a commitment to review the penalties before the 1988 Budget, after a full year's practical experience.

33. **Mr. Madden** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress he has made in securing more flexibility in setting the value added tax threshold.

Mr. Brooke: On 9 October 1986, the European Commission submitted to the Council of Ministers a draft directive proposing a VAT scheme to apply to small and medium sized businesses. One of the proposals in the directive is for an optional maximum threshold of 35,000 ecu (about £25,000).

Unemployment

20. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of unemployment based on the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. MacGregor: The overall cost to the Exchequer of unemployment and supplementary benefit paid to the unemployed is estimated to be £5·6 billion in 1986-87. In addition it is estimated that £1·15 billion will be paid in housing benefit, a benefit which can continue to be paid if the claimant finds employment.

39. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to include a forecast of the level of unemployment in 1987-88 in his next Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

44. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department has made any recent study of the comparative effects on unemployment of tax cuts and increased public expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: There are considerable limitations on such estimates, which depend on the definitions and assumptions used, as well as the time scale chosen.

Public and Private Investment

21. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of public and private investment in the current financial year; how this compares with the respective totals in 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Investment was at an all-time high in 1985 and I expect it to reach a new record level again this year.

Interest Rates

23. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Base rates are 11 per cent.

36. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the recent rise in interest rates will have on *(a)* inflation and *(b)* Government expenditure.

Mr. MacGregor: The recent rise in interest rates was necessary to maintain steady downward pressure on inflation. The level of interest rates is only one of a number of factors that are taken into account in the public expenditure survey, the outcome of which will be announced in the Autumn Statement.

Charities

25. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the growth of tax-relieved giving to charities between 1978 and 1985.

32. **Mr. Merchant** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of his policies to facilitate charitable giving on the level of giving to charities in real terms between 1978 and 1985.

Mr. Ian Stewart: After allowing for inflation, covenanted giving increased by nearly 60 per cent. from 1978 to 1985 and bequests to charities increased by 140 per cent.

51. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to introduce regulations governing payroll giving to charities, in accordance with the Finance Act 1986.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The regulations were published in draft on 28 October. Comments on the draft have been invited by 19 November. The Government intend to lay the regulations as soon as possible thereafter, once we have taken account of these comments.

54. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the operation of his tax incentive scheme for charities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Tax relief for payroll giving to charities starts in April 1987. The other new reliefs in this year's Finance Act to encourage charitable giving are already in operation and I hope that donors and charities will take full advantage of them.

Public Sector Pay

26. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what percentage public sector pay has increased in the last 12 months.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Average earnings in the whole economy increased at an underlying rate of 7½ per cent. in the 12 months to August. Separate figures for the public sector are not published.

Consumer Expenditure

27. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on current levels of consumer expenditure.

47. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about current levels of consumer expenditure.

Mr. MacGregor: Consumers' expenditure is estimated to have totalled £113·4 billion in the first half of 1986.

Income Tax

28. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what study his Department has conducted on the effect of reducing top marginal rates of income tax on tax yield.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Cutting marginal tax rates undoubtedly gives a stimulus to enterprise and effort, but I know of no recent studies into the effect of reducing top marginal rates in the United Kingdom.

37. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate what would be the effect on Treasury revenues of reintroducing the 1979 higher rate income tax scales.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The 1979 tax structure for the basic rate limit and higher rates and thresholds, if indexed to 1986-87 and applied to current levels of income, would yield about £1·7 billion more than the present tax regime. This makes no allowance for any possible change to income levels from introducing the proposed tax structure.

46. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the reduction in higher rate tax bands has had on the proportion of the income tax yield that is provided by higher rate taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1978-79 when higher rates of income tax were 40 per cent. to 83 per cent., about 3½ per cent. of taxpayers (counting a married couple as one) paid tax at higher rates. They contributed 20 per cent. of the total income tax yield. Since then, higher rates of tax have been reduced to 40 per cent. to 60 per cent., the threshold

for higher rates has been increased in real terms, the basic rate has been reduced, and incomes of higher rate taxpayers have increased more quickly than for other taxpayers. In 1986-87, about 5 per cent. of taxpayers pay at higher rates and they contribute 27 per cent. of the yield.

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people had incomes below the level which makes them liable to the standard rate of income tax in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Nurses (Tax Relief)

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to enable nurses to set against tax their compulsory initial and recurrent registration fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Inland Revenue has already agreed the tax relief is allowable from 1 January 1987 for the recurrent registration fees payable by nurses to the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, under existing legislation dealing with fees and subscriptions payable to professional bodies. No relief is allowable, however, under these provisions for initial registration fees. This follows the general principle of the schedule E expenses rules that relief is not given for expenses incurred to put a person in a position to perform the duties of an employment, and I do not think it would be appropriate to make a special exception for nurses.

Household Indebtedness

30. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he currently makes of the year-on-year increase in household indebtedness.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The best available statistics for the debt of the personal sector, which includes unincorporated businesses and non-profit making bodies as well as households, are shown in table 14.4 of "Financial Statistics", October 1986.

European Monetary System

31. **Mr. Knox** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next proposes to have discussions with the European Community Council of Ministers about the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him on 15 May 1986 at column 842.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will indicate what he considers to be the appropriate conditions for the United Kingdom membership of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A number of factors and their interaction need to be taken into account.

Wage Increases

35. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present average rate of wage increases in the United Kingdom; and what information he has as to how this compares with the United States of America, West Germany and Japan.

Mr. MacGregor: In the United Kingdom, underlying average earnings increased by 7¼ per cent. in the year to August 1986. The most recent figures show earnings rising by 1·9 per cent. on a year earlier in the United States, by 1·7 per cent. in West Germany and by 2·1 per cent. in Japan.

Share Ownership

38. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the current level of direct ownership of shares in the United Kingdom.

43. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the impact of the Trustee Savings Bank's sale on direct ownership of equities by individuals in the United Kingdom.

45. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the total level of direct shareholdings by individuals since the flotation of the Trustee Savings Bank.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates vary, but it is generally accepted that the number of individual shareholders has roughly doubled since 1979. The TSB flotation has provided a further boost to individual share ownership. There were over 3 million successful applications for shares, and a recent National Opinion Poll survey suggests that the issue may have attracted a million people who have never owned shares before.

42. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the extension of share ownership.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has received numerous representations welcoming the measures he has introduced, such as the personal equity plan scheme, to encourage the extension of share ownership by individuals.

Building Societies Act 1986

40. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the Building Societies Association to discuss the operation of the Building Societies Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my reply earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle). My right hon. Friend has no present plans to meet the Building Societies Association.

Civil Servants (Select Committees)

41. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's relationship with the Committee of Public Accounts of the Government's decision to instruct civil servants not to answer questions from Select Committees about the conduct of individual officials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Committee of Public Accounts takes evidence from accounting officers appointed by the Treasury. The Committee has been specifically assured by my Department that the Government's response to the Defence Committee is not intended to alter in any way the accounting officers' relationship with them.

Sub-contractors' Tax Certificates

48. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to improve the administrative efficiency of the system of sub-contractors' tax certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The certificates are being redesigned to improve security and reduce the possibility of misuse, and will come into operation today. There are no plans to make other changes.

Works of Art (Taxation)

49. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Her Majesty's Government have had any recent discussions with European Community finance Ministers on taxation of works of art for auction.

Mr. Brooke: No, but the Government are paying close attention to recent developments on EC Commission proposals.

Medium-term financial strategy

50. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the present policy on the medium-term financial strategy.

Mr. MacGregor: The medium-term financial strategy provides the framework for economic policy which has successfully reduced inflation to 3 per cent. and created the conditions for over five years of growth.

Christmas Parties (Taxation)

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to harmonise the practice of the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise with regard to the tax treatment of expenditure on Christmas parties for employees, in so far as it relates, on the one hand, to the non-charging to income tax of such expenditure as a benefit in kind, within modest limits, and the extent to which those costs can be offset against the company's value added tax liability, on the other.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Given the differences in purpose and scope between the taxes administered by Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, I am not aware of any respects in which the practices of the two Departments in relation to the treatment of expenditure by employers on annual parties for their employees need to be harmonised, but if my hon. Friend knows of difficulties in this area perhaps he will write to me.

Public Expenditure

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the proportion of public expenditure taken up by rent rebates, rate rebates, and housing benefit, in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Inland Revenue

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people were employed in the Inland Revenue in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The following table gives the number of staff in post at 1 April

Year	*Number*
1956	[1]51,559
1960	[1]56,093
1970	68,632
1975	74,196
1980	78,312

[1] Includes casual staff, not identified separately before 1967.

The number of staff in post at 1 October 1986 was 69,026.

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the occasions on which his Department was involved with United States customs, in relation to the United States investigation and fine of Systime plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Systime plc was the subject of informal discussions between United Kingdom and United States Customs between 1982 and 1985. The United States investigation and the fine on Systime plc were not discussed.

EC (Agricultural Expenditure)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what were the factors responsible for the conclusion of the European Economic Community Commissioners, reported to the October meeting of the Economic and Finance Council, that there would be a substantial overrun of agricultural expenditure in 1987; to what extent such extra expenditure would constitute a breach of the budgetary discipline agreement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) to what extent the European Economic Community Council's draft budget for 1987 takes account of the European Economic Community Commission's assessment that there will be a substantial overrun of agricultural expenditure in 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The Council's draft budget for 1987 makes provision for agricultural expenditure at the level of the budget discipline guideline; what happened at the October ECOFIN Council was that the Commission warned that, unless action is taken, actual expenditure is likely substantially to exceed the guideline figure. This assessment took a number of factors into account, including a further fall in the value of the United States dollar and recent agrimonetary changes. The next steps are for the Agriculture Council to take decisions on the Commission's existing proposals and for the Commission itself to put forward further proposals. Whether any additional expenditure would involve a breach of budget discipline would depend on whether there were genuinely exceptional circumstances which made such expenditure necessary.

EC (Finance Council)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the reservations expressed in the October

European Economic Community Finance Council by the German, Greek and Danish delegations on the matter of his Presidency conclusions at that meeting.

Mr. Brooke: Reservations were expressed that the solution to the problems of redirecting the common agricultural policy needed to take account, in addition, of political and social aspects. One delegation questioned whether it was right to approach these problems from a budgetary point of view and entered a general reserve on these grounds.

Inflation

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay).

Central Office of Information

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is proposing any change to the Central Office of Information cash limit for 1986-87.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XIX vote 1 will be increased by £27,000,000 from £70,977,000 to £97,977,000. The increase will be offset by reimbursements by the clients of the Central Office of Information and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the latest estimate of the number of interviews carried out under the restart scheme together with the results of these interviews in placing people into jobs, the community programme, jobclubs, enterprise allowance scheme, restart courses, training courses, voluntary projects programmes, and other outcomes.

Mr. Lee: By 9 October, 366,451 people had been counselled under restart:

2,547	were placed in jobs
9,757	were placed on the community programme
2,890	were placed in jobclubs
1,585	were placed on the enterprise allowance scheme
31,012	started restart courses
5,488	started training courses
672	joined the voluntary projects programme or began other voluntary work
104	started a course at an employment rehabilitation centre

The above placings reflect only those arising from referrals made at the restart interview. They do not reflect people who find jobs, or other solutions to their unemployment, wholly or partly as a result of advice given by counselling staff or restart courses. The Manpower Services Commission does not follow the progress of individuals once they have been counselled under restart.

Unemployed (Job Training)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General (1) whether the training being offered to the six-month unemployed and the required certificate or qualification is going to be linked to other established schemes and lead to established qualifications;

(2) what types of training are to be covered in the pilot scheme for job training for the six-month unemployed;

(3) what criteria, apart from age, the restart counsellor will be using to decide whether an interviewee is eligible for the pilot scheme for job training for the six-month unemployed;

(4) how many places are on the pilot schemes for job training for the six-month unemployed;

(5) how long he expects interviewees to wait before joining the new job training scheme for the six-month unemployed if the restart counsellor thinks he or she is suitable;

(6) what consultations he has had with the CBI regarding the new job training scheme for the six-month unemployed; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what submission he has had from the trade unions and interested groups regarding the job training scheme for the six-month unemployed;

(8) what are the criteria for assessment before, during and at the end of the pilot job training scheme for the six-month unemployed.

Mr. Trippier: The pilot training programme for the six-month unemployed will be operated by managing agents in collaboration with the Manpower Services Commission; it will be for each managing agent to draw as appropriate on existing courses and on new tailor-made provision to meet the particular training needs of individuals on the programme. Vocational qualifications will be made available to trainees wherever possible.

Each managing agent is expected to provide participants with initial assessment, training in occupational skills supported by relevant practical experience and an element of training in job seeking skills. They must also offer training in information technology and self-employment skills.

The programme will be open to adults in the pilot areas who have been unemployed for six months or more, as one of the aims is to establish how much demand for training there is amongst this group. It is not yet possible to say how many training places will be made available. Each managing agent will be responsible for making his own arrangements for placing individuals on the programme with the minimum possible delay. Plans for the programme were discussed by the Manpower Services Commission, on which both CBI and TUC are represented, at their meeting on 21 October.

Assessment will take place at the beginning of the programme, to establish which training elements individuals should then pursue; during the programme to review progress; and at or near the end of the programme to award qualifications and helping individuals find jobs.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many and what percentage of those who participated in the restart scheme have gone on to permanent employment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: By 9 October 366,451 people had been interviewed under restart. 30,218 of them (8·2 per cent.) are known to have ceased claiming unemployment benefit but we have no means of measuring exactly how many of these are now in permanent employment. An early survey conducted by the Manpower Services

Commission in the pilot areas indicated that approximately 60 per cent. of these people will have gone into employment but we are still considering the basis and the reliability of that survey.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General what criteria were used when choosing the pilot areas for restart.

Mr. Lee: The nine pilot areas were chosen to reflect a wide range of labour market conditions and to provide a wide geographical spread throughout Great Britain.

Training Schemes

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General why details of the number of people on special work or training schemes have been dropped from his Department's monthly press release details.

Mr. Lee: Since May we have arranged for the numbers of people assisted by employment measures and YTS to be published monthly in the *Employment Gazette* which is available in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the date and nature of each change made since 1979 in the method of calculating total unemployment statistics, showing the effect of each change in each region in the subsequent monthly figure.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have made only three changes in the method of calculating unemployment statistics since 1979. The major one follows the decision in October 1982 to cease compulsory registration at jobcentres. The previous count of registrants at jobcentres became incomplete and it was necessary to move counting claimants at unemployment benefit offices. We have also delayed the compilation of the figures to correct over-recording, and made a minor change in Northern Ireland again because of over-recording. There have also been several administrative changes which have inevitably affected the coverage of the count. Only three have been significant.

The following are the average monthly affects of each change in method of calculation at the time they occurred in each region:

Changes affecting the unemployment count

Region	*Registrant to claimant count* *October 1982*	*Reconciliation of benefit records in Northern Ireland* *July 1985*	*Reduction of over-recording* *March 1986*
South East	−54,000	—	−18,420
Greater London	−29,000	—	−9,820
East Anglia	−4,000	—	−1,430
South West	−8,000	—	−4,300
West Midlands	−20,000	—	−3,910
East Midlands	−8,000	—	−2,590
Yorks and Humberside	−14,000	—	−3,690
North West	−32,000	—	−5,380
North	−10,000	—	−2,180
Wales	−10,000	—	−1,990
Scotland	−22,000	—	−4,570
Great Britain	−182,000	—	−48,460
Northern Ireland	−8,000	−5,000	−1,540
United Kingdom	−190,000	−5,000	−50,000

These effects cannot simply be added together to give a cumulative effect on subsequent unemployment figures, because the effects tend to vary over time.

Gas Installation

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the financial costs for the training and registration of gas installers under the Confederation of Registered Gas Installers for the years 1980 to 1985, inclusive, *(b)* the contribution made by the British Gas Corporation to those financial costs and *(c)* the number of incidents recorded as a result of faulty gas installation in the years 1980 to 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Trippier: Between 1980-85 the Confederation for the registration of Gas Installers was funded by the British Gas Corporation and its financial arrangements were a matter for the corporation.

Figures are not available for the number of incidents resulting specifically from faulty gas installation. The following table gives the number of fires, explosions and carbon monoxide poisonings caused by piped gas:

	Number
1980	226
1981	257
1982	255
1983	210
1984	214
1985	288

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Paymaster General if he will ensure that the new gas supply company will continue to be responsible for funding the training of installers and the provision of a competent installation service through the successor organisation to the Confederation of Registered Gas Installers.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have asked the Health and Safety Commission and the Council of the Confederation of Registered Gas Installers to develop proposals for a new, independent and representative body to promote safety in gas installation. These proposals, which will include funding, are awaited.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General what information about the adaptations to premises and equipment scheme, and other help extended by the Manpower Services Commission to employers and disabled employees is given to employers whenever they apply for a permit to employ a non-disabled person when they are under quota.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission's programme to promote the adoption and implementation of constructive policies and practices towards the employment of people with disabilities has, amongst its aims, that of keeping employers generally aware of the services and support available, including the adaptations to premises and equipment scheme. In addition, where an employer applies for a permit to engage non-disabled people, it is the Manpower Services Commission's policy that information about help that is available for the adaptation of premises and equipment, together with other relevant services, is presented to the employer when he is asked to consider people with disabilities who may be available for such vacancies.

Health and Safety

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General what is the Government's policy on enforcement action against employers who breach the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act and regulations made under them.

Mr. Trippier: Under section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, enforcement policy is primarily the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities, subject to guidance issued from time to time by the Health and Safety Commission.

Inspectors appointed under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act will use the powers of enforcement available to them under the Act when in their judgment such action provides the best means of protecting the health and safety of people at work and/or the public.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General (1) for each of the years 1979 to 1985, inclusive, what proportion of premises registered with the Factory Inspectorate were or are subject to planned inspections by factory inspectors;

(2) for each of the years 1979 to 1986, inclusive, how many premises were registered with the Factory Inspectorate in each of the following categories of inspection rating total: *(a)* 0-5, *(b)* 6-10, *(c)* 11-15, *(d)* 16-20, *(e)* 21-25, *(f)* 26-30, *(g)* 31-35, *(h)* 36-40, *(i)* 41-45, *(j)* 46-50 and *(k)* 51-55;

(3) for each Health and Safety Executive inspection rating total between 0 and 55, what is Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate's intended frequency of planned inspection; and what the actual frequency of planned inspection has been for each of the years 1979 to 1985, for each of the inspection ratings totals between 0 and 55;

(4) how many fatal accidents and major injuries occurred in premises in each of the following categories of Health and Safety Executives inspection rating total: *(a)* 0-5, *(b)* 6-10, *(c)* 11-15, *(d)* 16-20, *(e)* 21-25, *(f)* 26-30, *(g)* 31-35, *(h)* 36-40, *(i)* 41-45, *(j)* 46-50, *(k)* 51-55 and *(l)* for each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Trippier: A comprehensive central record of the information requested is not kept and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General how the number of factory inspectors in the field differs from the number of factory inspectors employed in Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate.

Mr. Trippier: On 1 November 566 factory inspectors were employed in Her Majesty's factory inspectorate, 544 of whom work in the field.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General, for each of the years 1978 to 1986, how many factory inspectors are or were employed in each of the following categories: Her Majesty's factory inspectorate total, Health and Safety Executive factory inspectorate division and factory inspectors in the field.

Mr. Trippier: The information is as follows. The figures exclude specialist inspectors who formerly worked in Her Majesty's factory inspectorate but now form part of the Health and Safety Executive's technology and air pollution division.

1 April	*Factory Inspectors in HSE as a whole*	*Factory Inspectors in HM Factory Inspectorate*	*Factory Inspectors in HMFI (Field only)*
1978	695	642	619
1979	742	688	656
1980	759	702	664
1981	735	682	638
1982	678	620	594
1983	654	589	563
1984	627	564	539
1985	652	589	559
1986	623	560	540

All factory inspectors employed in the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorate divisions work in Her Majesty's factory inspectorate. A number of factory inspectors work in other divisions of the executive, mainly on policy development.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General how many factory inspectors in the field are intended to be in post in December 1986, 1987 and 1988, at each of the following grades *(a)* principal inspector, *(b)* grade 1B inspector, *(c)* grade 1A inspector and *(d)* grade 2 inspector.

Mr. Trippier: On 1 November there were 25 principal inspectors (national) (generally known as deputy superintending inspectors), 119 principal inspectors (class 1A), 294 inspectors class 1B, and 86 class II inspectors in the field organisation of Her Majesty's factory inspectorate. There were also 20 more factory inspectors in senior management positions.

It is not possible to give precise estimates of future staffing.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General how many visits were made by factory inspectors in 1985; and what percentage change this represents over 1980 to 1984.

Mr. Trippier: A total of 190,546 visits were paid by factory inspectors in 1985; 11·8 per cent. fewer visits were paid in 1985 than in 1980.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General, for each of the employment sectors in the standard industrial classification, what specific initiatives have been taken in each of the last five years by the Health and Safety Executive to discuss with managements and unions the underlying causes of accidents and ill health and what can be done to reduce them.

Mr. Trippier: Initiatives mounted by the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last five years are described in the annual published reports of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive. I have arranged for the hon. Member to receive copies of the latest published reports.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General if he will list the main additional areas of enforcement responsibility which Her Majesty's factory inspectorate took on in each of the years between 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Trippier: The main additional areas of enforcement responsibility taken by Her Majesty's factory inspectorate since 1979 are as follows:

1981

The notification of Accidents and Dangerous occurrences regulations.

The Health and Safety (dangerous pathogens) regulations.

The control of lead at work regulations.

The diving operations at work regulations.

1982

The Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in road tankers and tank containers) regulations.

The notification of new substances regulations.

1983

The Notification of Installations Handling hazardous substances regulations.

1984

The asbestos licensing regulations.

The classification packaging and labelling regulations.

1985

The Gas Safety Regulations.

The control of industrial major accident hazards regulations.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General, for each of the years 1979 to 1985, what was the number of staff days per year spent by factory inspectors, on each of the following areas *(a)* gas safety, *(b)* asbestos licensing and *(c)* work arising out of and in preparation for the coming into force of the control of industrial major accident hazard regulations.

Mr. Trippier: The figures are not available for years before 1985. The number of staff days spent by factory inspectors in the HSE areas in the period April 1985 to March 1986 on work in the areas specified were recorded as follows:

	Days
Gas Safety	558
Asbestos Licensing	3,202
Major hazards	2,584

Job Losses

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many jobs were lost in manufacturing for each month since 1956.

Mr. Lee: Information about job gains and losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

Estimates of the numbers of employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Great Britain are available on a consistent basis from June 1959. They are available for June each year from June 1959 to June 1977, quarterly from September 1977 to December 1981 and monthly from January 1982 to August 1986.

The available estimates for June 1959 to June 1971, analysed according to the 1968 standard industrial classification (SIC), were published on page 196 of the March 1975 issue of the Department of *Employment Gazette*. The available estimates for June 1971 to June 1977, analysed according to the 1980 SIC, may be found in table 1·2 of Historical Supplement No 1 published with the April 1985 issue of *Employment Gazette*. Both publications are in the Library.

The following tables give the available information for June 1977 to August 1986. The estimates on which the comparisons are based are unadjusted for seasonable variation.

The following tables give the available information for June 1977 to August 1986. The estimates on which the comparisons are based are unadjusted for seasonable variation:

Employees in Employment in Manufacturing Industries in Great Britain

Table 1—Net Changes between June 1977 and December 198!

Quarter Month	*Net change, since previous, quarter month*
1977	
September	38,000
December	−2,000
1978	
March	−51,000
June	−21,000
September	34,000
December	−5,000
1979	
March	−63,000
June	1,000
September	15,000
December	−59,000
1980	
March	−146,000
June	−119,000
September	−174,000
December	−212,000
1981	
March	−191,000

Table 1—Net Changes between June 1977 and December 1981

Quarter Month	Net change, since previous, quarter month
June	−129,000
September	−42,000
December	−105,000

Table 2—Net changes between December 1981 and August 1986

Month	Net change since previous month
1982	
January	−61,000
February	−13,000
March	− 8,000
April	−40,000
May	−17,000
June	−25,000
July	− 5,000
August	−18,000
September	−24,000
October	−33,000
November	−42,000
December	−36,000
1983	
January	−64,000
February	−11,000
March	−15,000
April	−17,000
May	−14,000
June	− 4,000
July	15,000
August	8,000
September	−16,000
October	−19,000
November	3,000
December	−23,000
1984	
January	−43,000
February	− 8,000
March	6,000
April	− 4,000
May	8,000
June	9,000
July	19,000
August	5,000
September	12,000
October	0
November	− 5,000
December	−10,000
1985	
January	−43,000
February	2,000
March	0
April	− 7,000
May	11,000
June	6,000
July	30,000
August	1,000
September	7,000
October	−10,000
November	−17,000
December	− 9,000
1986	
January	−43,000
February	−24,000
March	4,000
April	−14,000
May	−15,000
June	1,000
July	5,000
August	1,000

Action for Jobs (Advertising Campaign)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General how much has been spent on the "Action for Jobs" advertising campaign, nationally and regionally; how he expects to assess its effects; and what effects he expects it to have.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 October 1986, c. *215*]: There was an error in the information contained in my previous reply. About £6·5 million has been spent so far on "Action for Jobs" advertising. This represents 0·2 per cent. of the total expenditure of £3 billion this year on more than 30 employment, enterprise and training measures described in the "Action for Jobs" booklet.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about allegations of corruption involving certain officers of the Metropolitan police and Mr. Roy Garner and others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has appointed the chief constable of South Yorkshire, Mr. Peter Wright, to investigate these allegations. The investigation will be supervised by the Police Complaints Authority, which has approved Mr. Wright's appointment.

Airey Neave (Murder)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to the circumstances in which, on or before October 1985, two detective constables represented themselves as having murdered the late Airey Neave.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The right hon. Member's question relates to criminal proceedings now before the courts. It would not be right to comment.

Immigration

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information and evidence available to immigration officers at United Kingdom ports of entry when considering the bona fides of intending visitors from Pakistan will not be available to entry clearance officers in Pakistan.

Mr. Waddington: Information from official records here is available to entry clearance officers abroad, though less readily than to immigration officers at United Kingdom ports. Entry clearance officers consider all evidence submitted by or obtained from applicants. The Immigration Act 1971 gives immigration officers, but not entry clearance officers, powers to search and to examine documents found on search.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people from *(a)* Bangladesh, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* India, *(d)* Ghana and *(e)* Nigeria have been held at West Laingeton detention centre; and why they have been forced to wear prison clothing.

Mr. Waddington: The information relates to passengers from the five countries detained in HM detention centre, Blantyre house, Cranbrook and Erlestoke youth custody centre, Lavington, Devizes, and at midnight 2 November, was as follows:

Nationality	*Number detained*
Bangladesh	43
Ghana	1
India	15
Nigeria	0
Pakistan	3

Persons detained at these establishments under the Immigration Act 1971 are not required to wear prison clothing.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of applicants for *(a)* entry clearance and *(b)* visas from (i) India, (ii) Bangladesh, (iii) Pakistan, (iv) Ghana and (v) Nigeria as of 30 October, or the nearest date available; and what is the equivalent figure for entry clearance for the same date in 1985 and 1984.

Mr. Waddington: The latest complete information currently available centrally on entry clearance applications outstanding in the Indian sub-continent relates to end June 1986 and is given in the table. Corresponding information for Ghana and Nigeria is not available. Citizens of these countries whose application is granted are issued with an entry certificate or visa, depending on the requirements in operation at the time of issue.

Persons awaiting a decision on their application for entry clearance[1] to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Country	*End June 1984*	*End June 1985*	*End June 1986*
India	3,500	3,000	3,500
Bangladesh	12,800	12,700	10,100
Pakistan	7,300	7,300	7,500

[1] Including both applications for settlement and for temporary purposes.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are made for *(a)* dietary needs, *(b)* child care and *(c)* translation for arrivals at all entry ports in the United Kingdom; and if he will publish the instruction for guidance notes issued by his Department to the immigration service.

Mr. Waddington: The information given relates to those detention centres for which the immigration service is responsible. The dietary needs of detainees are as far as possible met by the wide range of meals available. Children are not normally detained unless accompanied by one or both parents, or a female relative; when a child is detained a female member of staff is always in attendance. House rules setting out the domestic arrangements are prominently displayed in a variety of languages in each centre. Arrangements are well advanced to increase the range of translations and to issue individual copies to all detainees. A copy of the code of practice covering standards for immigration detention centres has already been placed in the Library.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people arriving in the United Kingdom from *(a)* India, *(b)* Bangladesh, *(c)* Pakistan, *(d)* Ghana and *(e)* Nigeria since 1 October who tried to enter as visitors were subsequently returned despite hon. Members' requests that they not be sent back.

Mr. Waddington: Those referred to in the reply given to the question by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 27 October, except that four passengers, not five, were sent back on 19 October when a right hon. or hon. Member had expressed an interest in the case prior to a decision to refuse entry. All the passengers concerned were from Bangladesh.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from *(a)* India, *(b)* Bangladesh, *(c)* Pakistan, *(d)* Ghana and *(e)* Nigeria have been (i) held and (ii) are still being held by the Immigration Service since 1 October.

Mr. Waddington: The information readily available relates to passengers of the five nationalities detained at midnight on 2 November in immigration service detention centres at Gatwick, Heathrow and Harmondsworth, HM detention centre, Blantyre house and Erlestoke youth custody centre:

Nationality	*Number Currently detained*
Bangladesh	47
Ghana	6
India	18
Nigeria	4
Pakistan	6

Mr. Vanunu (Kidnapping)

Mr. Beaumont-Dark asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Mr. Mordechai Vanunu left the United Kingdom through the normal departure channels.

Mr. Waddington: I have nothing that I can add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on 3 November at column *326*.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the arrival of Mr. Vanunu within the United Kingdom was registered on his Department's computer.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Dogs

Mr. John Hunt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet been able to assess the results of the pilot scheme, initiated in September 1985, to test the effectiveness of the model byelaws designed to reduce the problem of dogs fouling in public places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not yet completed our consideration of the results of the pilot scheme, but expect to do so, and to make an announcement, fairly shortly.

National Sunday

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions the Metropolitan police have had with the National Front concerning its participation in Remembrance Sunday.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The National Front will take no part in the national service of remembrance on 9 November. However, I understand from the commissioner that notification has been received from the National Front of its intention, as in the previous 18 years, to hold a procession to the cenotaph later that afternoon. Metropolitan police officers have discussed the proposed arrangements with the procession organisers on two occasions.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used by the Metropolitan police in deciding the order of marching to the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Where two organisations wish to hold a public procession at the same place at the same time, and alternative arrangements cannot be agreed in discussion, the commissioner takes into account the risk of confusion and disorder, and whether the procession has been held in previous years. Under section 3 of the Public Order Act 1936 the commissioner has power to issue directions to those organising or participating in a procession if he has reasonable grounds for apprehending that it may occasion serious public disorder.

Detained Persons

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were held in police cells on remand in England and Wales on 24 September and each succeeding day to the latest date available.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prisoners, most of whom are likely to have been untried, held in police cells in England and Wales was as follows:

Date	*Number*
September	
24-25	94
25-26	105
26-27	80
27-29	100
29-30	135
30- 1 *October*	131
October	
1- 2	105
2- 3	97
3- 4	74
4- 6	76
6- 7	84
7- 8	87
8- 9	89
9-10	96
10-11	85
11-13	104
13-14	132
14-15	134
15-16	136
16-17	97
17-18	125
18-20	120
20-21	140
21-22	127
22-23	136
23-24	118
24-25	131
25-27	143
27-28	149
28-29	139
29-30	103
30-31	106
31- 1 *November*	106
November	
1- 3	117
3- 4	130

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of persons held in prisons in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1986 the total number of persons held in Prison Department custody in England and Wales was 47,414.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of persons held on remand in prison in the south-east region of the Prison Department for the most recent date available; and what was the comparable figure for each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The information, which excludes those held in police cells, is as follows:

Untried and convicted unsentenced population of establishments in the South East Region of the Prison Department

At 30 September	*Number of Persons*
1981	2,650
1982	2,490
1983	2,860
1984	3,380
1985	3,690
1986	4,030

Marches

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration has been given to allowing chief constables the power to request the banning of a march or marches to the Home Secretary without the approval of the local council concerned.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to paragraph 50 of the Green Paper "Review of the Public Order Act and related legislation" (Cmnd. 7891), which canvassed this option, and to paragraph 4.15 of the White Paper "Review of Public Order" (Cmnd. 9510) which records the result of that consideration. Clause 13 of the Public Order Bill, which has just completed its parliamentary passage, retains the existing procedure for banning marches.

Prisoners (Correspondence)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate why letters addressed by a prisoner in Guernsey to the hon. Members for Battersea; for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes); for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes); and to Lord Elton at the time he was a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office were withheld.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: If the hon. Member provides me with details, I will make inquiries and write to him.

Magistrates' Courts

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a statement on future policy with regard to the professional qualifications required of magistrates' court clerks.

Mr. Mellor: I hope to do so within the next few weeks.

Passports

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home department if he will now take steps to ensure that the Welsh language can be officially recognised on passports relating to residents of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Birthplaces in Wales can be entered in passports in Welsh on request. There are no plans to go beyond this.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the status of a person bearing an Isle of Man passport in relation to the EEC; and what effect the development of a Europassport will have on citizens of the Isle of Man.

Mr. Waddington: The majority, but not all, of British citizens holding British passports issued in the Isle of Man are entitled to European community benefits relating to employment and establishment. Where they are not, this is indicated in their passports.

British citizens from the Isle of Man will be granted the new British passport in the EC common format when it is introduced in the United Kingdom. As at present, the passport will be suitably endorsed if the holder is not entitled to EC benefits.

The Isle of Man authorities have yet to indicate how they wish to adapt the format of the passport that they issue.

Leg Irons

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the use of leg irons to restrain persons in custody, and towards the length of time for which such people should remain so restrained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Leg irons are not used in prison establishments in England and Wales. A leather ankle strap may, however, be employed where a prisoner resorts to kicking to resist his removal from one part of an establishment to another and it is necessary to restrain him to avoid his injuring himself or others. Staff are instructed that the strap is to be taken off as soon as the removal of the prisoner is completed.

I understand that leg irons are not used by any police force in England and Wales.

Little Ilford Estate, London

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the current arrangements for policing the Little Ilford estate in London, East 12; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No; but if the hon. Gentleman is concerned about a particular aspect of the policing of the estate perhaps he would let me know.

Royal Observer Corps

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what land and establishments are owned or leased by the Royal Observer Corps in Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Royal Observer Corps does not own or lease land or property. It provides the field force for the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation, and in Wales mans 67 monitoring posts and two group controls.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which Royal Observer Corps establishments, military establishments and local authorities were involved in exercise Warmon on 19 and 26 October.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no Royal Observer Corps establishments as such, but Royal Observer Corps personnel provided the field force to man the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation which was activated for the exercise. A number of military and local authorities also participated but this information has not yet been collated. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the manpower, full-time, part-time and volunteer, of the Royal Observer Corps in Wales; and whether it is at present at full strength.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In Wales, the full-time manpower of the Royal Observer Corps is four against an establishment of four; there are no part-time members; volunteer strength is 831, against an establishment of 947.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for developing the rôle of the Royal Observer Corps in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The role of the Royal Observer Corps is kept under regular consideration. There are no plans at present to develop the role of the Royal Observer Corps.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what figures he has for the numbers of violent attacks on women in the area of Greater London, for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 24 April at columns *182-83*. Numbers of recorded offences of rape for each police force area are published annually in table S3/1 of volume 3 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables".

Irish Citizens

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to authorise the removal from the United Kingdom to the Irish Republic of any Irish citizen in respect of whom there is reason to believe that he has settled in the United Kingdom solely in order to obtain superior rates of benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans any changes in the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Hurd: As announced in the White Paper "Criminal Justice: Plans for Legislation", we intend to put criminal injuries compensation on to a statutory basis; the report of the interdepartmental working party which has reviewed the scheme to this end is being published today. The Government broadly accept the working party's recommendations — in particular that compensation given to the innocent victims of violent crime should continue to be based on civil damages, subject to certain well-recognised exceptions — and propose to introduce legislation on this basis.

The Government have resolved to make available in future years considerable extra funds to enable current and future applications to be dealt with. The aim is to reduce the present backlog of work by about 5,000 cases a year. An additional £114 million will be made available over the period 1987-88 to 1989-90. For 1987-88 the increase is £33 million, which represents an increase of 65 per cent. over the previously planned provision. This allows for the necessary additional staff as well as increased numbers of payments.

In the course of settling upon the financial provision to be made available, we have considered whether it is necessary to revise the lower limit for compensation (at present £500 in cases of family violence and £400 in other cases). The limit needs to be revised periodically in order to allow resources to be concentrated on the more seriously injured. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have decided that when an injury is sustained on or after 7 November 1986 compensation will be payable under the scheme only if the injury is one for which compensation of at least £550 will be awarded. The new limit will apply also to injuries sustained before 7 November if the application is received by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board after 6 January 1987.

As a further step towards ensuring that the new resources are devoted to the maximum possible extent to the needs of victims, we are considering with the board whether further changes need to be made to the current scheme to enable cases to be dealt with more quickly and economically while not affecting the compensation to which the victim is entitled.

Charity Commission

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any changes to announce in the cash and running cost limits for the Charity Commission.

Mr. Hurd: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary Estimate, the cash limit on the Charity Commission's Vote will be raised by £187,000 from £5,124,000 to £5,311,000, necessitated by additional operational requirements net of costs which have been absorbed, and the running costs limit by £247,000 from £5,032,000 to £5,279,000. The cash limit increase will be charged to the Reserve, and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

Immigration

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes are intended in the guidelines on the handling of representations by hon. Members in immigration cases; and when they are to take effect.

Mr. Hurd: The following change will be made to paragraph 3 of the guidelines in place of that announced in answer to the question by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) on 22 October and will apply to passengers arriving on or after 10 November 1986.

"*Representations to the Minister*

3(i) Where a passenger refused entry or a person acting on his behalf notifies the immigration officer that he intends to seek the assistance of a Member, removal will not take place for 24 hours or until the afternoon of the next working day if longer.

(ii) A Member wishing to submit representations in the case of a person refused entry may request the Minister's Private Office or, out of working hours, the Home Office Duty Officer, to arrange for the removal of the passenger to be deferred. If the passenger was refused entry because he did not have an entry clearance required under the Immigration Rules action to remove the passenger will only be deferred if at the time of intervention the Member demonstrates that there are exceptional and compelling circumstances (eg recent bereavement or sudden grave illness here in the immediate family). In such cases and in cases of refusal where no entry clearance was required action to remove the passenger will normally be deferred for a period of 12 working days to enable the Member to submit written representations.

Note

An entry clearance may take the form of a visa, an entry certificate (for non-visa Commonwealth citizens) or a letter of consent (for all other non-visa nationals). Visa nationals apart from citizens of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Ghana and Sri Lanka (and Nigeria when the visa requirement becomes operative) who are settled here or here for a limited time but long-term purpose, such as work or study, who have all been granted an exemption, require a visa whatever the purpose of their journey here. All other nationals require an entry clearance when coming for work, settlement, marriage leading to settlement, or as a dependant of one of these categories. Where there are genuine medical, family or other compelling compassionate circumstances British Diplomatic Posts abroad will give urgent consideration to visa applications."

Copies of the amendment have been placed in the Library and are being sent to all Members, together with a copy of the information leaflet which explains details of visa exemptions and how to obtain passport endorsements signifying exemption.

Visas

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he is making to issue multiple visas to regular visitors from *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* Bangladesh, and *(d)* Nigeria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Posts in these four countries have been instructed to issue multiple entry visas to regular bona fide visitors and are doing so, in large numbers.

Breathalyser

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to announce a decision on the continuation of the blood test option for drivers subjected to a Lion Intoximeter 3000 breathalyser test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to the reply* of 3 November, c. *225*]: Experience since the publication of the Home Office forensic science service report on the monitoring of the

evidential breath test machines confirms that the machines do not place subjects unjustly in jeopardy, and that they should continue to be the principal means of establishing the level of alcohol for the purposes of deciding on prosecution in drink drive cases.

The necessary improvements to the performance of the Lion Intoximeter's acetone detector identified by the report have been carried out, and the recommendation for a blood or urine test to be available in cases where the difference between the two breath samples is wide will be implemented by continuing to allow the option on a non-statutory basis in these cases.

The average take-up rate for the general non-statutory blood or urine option was 16 per cent. in 1985, with monthly figures of 14 per cent. and 15 per cent. in the second half of the year. The experience of those exercising the option will have been that the blood test result confirms the evidential breath test, when any necessary allowance is made for the passage of time between the two types of test. Accordingly, I expect confidence in the machines to continue to grow but I have decided to allow the option to continue for a further period to allow this confidence to be further consolidated. The option will be reviewed again in two years' time.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers in the Metropolitan police force of the rank *(a)* inspector, *(b)* sergeant, *(c)* constable, resigned from the Metropolitan police in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985

Mr. Douglas Hogg [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1986, c. *958*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the number of inspectors, sergeants and constables who resigned from the Metropolitan police (including officers who resigned on transfer to other forces and those required to resign) from 1980 to 1985 is as follows:

	Inspectors	*Sergeants*	*Constables*
1980	2	29	783
1981	3	18	835
1982	3	16	744
1983	2	17	585
1984	1	15	458
1985	0	22	508

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Small Farmers

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his definition of a small farmer; and whether this definition correspondes to that used by the European Commission.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Farm business size is now measured by the financial potential of the holding in terms of the margins which might be expected from its crops and stock. The margins used are standard gross margins (SGM) at average 1978-80 values, quantified in the United Kingdom in British size units (BSU). Conventionally, a small farm is taken to be one in the range four to 16 BSU. The principles underlying the European Communities' system of farm classification are the same as those adopted in the United Kingdom. The maximum threshold for a small farm under the EC classification is, however, about half that adopted in the United Kingdom, reflecting the smaller average size of holdings in the EC overall.

Fish

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve the marketing and promotion of British fish products and British-caught fish.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are currently providing some £7·9 million towards a three-year seafish industry development programme for improving the marketing and consumption of fish. The possibility of further funding after 31 March 1987 is under active consideration.

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any further arrangements have been made for the monitoring of radiation in fish and fish products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: This Department has regularly and extensively monitored radioactivity in the United Kingdom aquatic environment, including its fish, for nearly 20 years, and regularly published the results. The two most recent reports, of which one dealt specifically with the impact of the Chernobyl accident, were published on 8 October. Copies were placed in the Library of the House in the normal way. These reports confirm that the levels of radioactivity in fish and other materials taken from waters around and within the United Kingdom pose no threat to safety. This monitoring will be maintained at an appropriate level and the results will continue to be published.

Illegal Fishing (Arrests)

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Spanish fishing vessels have been arrested for the offence of illegal fishing in United Kingdom territorial waters in 1985 and so far in 1986.

Mr. Gummer: In 1985, five Spanish vessels were arrested for unauthorised fishing within British fishery limits. In addition, 10 vessels were arrested for other offences, including the retention of undersized fish and failure to keep an accurate logbook. So far in 1986 six Spanish vessels have been arrested for unauthorised fishing and three for other offences.

Fishing Vessels

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the number and type of fishing vessels built with financial assistance from the state and state-funded agencies in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 and *(b)* the number of these vessels built in Scottish shipyards.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

Type	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*Total*
(a) Assistance approved during 1980-85 (see note)							
Liner	1	2	—	—	—	—	3
Netter	2	5	3	2	3	—	15
Potter (or Creeler)	7	11	14	18	21	22	93
Seiner	—	—	2	3	12	1	18
Trawler	11	15	6	11	10	12	65
Seiner-Trawler	10	9	6	14	13	9	61
Scallop Dredger-Trawler	—	—	—	2	—	3	5
Liner-Trawler	1	—	—	2	3	—	6
Netter-Trawler	1	—	1	2	—	3	7
Potter-Trawler	2	—	—	1	—	—	3
Potter-Netter-Trawler	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Liner-Netter-Trawler	3	—	—	—	—	—	3
Liner-Netter	2	4	2	3	1	2	14
Liner-Potter	1	3	1	8	11	1	25
Potter-Netter	5	8	5	2	5	11	36
Dredger-Netter	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Beam-Trawler	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
Pair-Trawler	—	—	—	—	—	4	4
Total	47	57	40	68	79	71	362
(b) Of which, ordered from Scottish yards	19	17	12	25	32	20	125

Note:

The above figures relate to financial assistance approved by the Sea Fish Industry Authority (and its predecessors, the White Fish Authority and the Herring Industry Board, before October 1981) and by the Highlands and Islands Development Board. Construction of some of the vessels will not have been completed during the year shown.

Water Bailiffs

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is available to him concerning the number of water bailiffs currently employed by each of the water authorities in England and Wales; and what total costs are so involved.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is not immediately available, but I am in touch with the water authorities and will write to my hon. Friend.

Council of Fisheries Ministers

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Council of Fisheries Ministers meeting on 5 November.

Mr. Gummer: Together with my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers on 5 November, under the presidency of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

I am delighted to report that the Council, by a qualified majority, reached a common position on a regulation designed to strengthen the arrangements for the enforcement of the common fisheries policy in the Community. This agreement will be formally endorsed when the views of the European Parliament are received.

In addition to a general strengthening of the arrangements for inspection, monitoring and the keeping of records, the regulation has two main features. First, it requires member states to provide the Commission inspectors with such access and means as they need to oversee national inspection and monitoring arrangements. This is a further important step in ensuring that enforcement in all member states is carried out on an effective but evenhanded basis. Secondly, the regulation empowers the Commission, after informing the member states concerned, to close a fishery when the total allowable catch is exhausted and it provides for member states which overfish their quotas to provide compensation to the other member states concerned. This is the first time that agreement has been reached to penalise overfishing and it will obviously strengthen the incentive to observe the quotas. The United Kingdom Government have been giving considerable priority to the strengthening of the control arrangements and we warmly welcome these measures.

The Council also received a progress report on the discussions about the Commission proposals on structures and had a useful and fairly detailed exchange of views. These proposals will be considered further at the next Council meeting on 3 December.

Lamb Exports

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will raise at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers reports that the French customs authorities have given details to protestors regarding the import of British lamb; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: We have no evidence to support these reports. The French authorities have assured us that they are doing everything possible to prevent incidents involving interference with British lamb and have undertaken to pay compensation. We are, however, continuing to monitor the lamb trade most carefully and will not hesitate to press the French Government once more if consignments suffer unreasonable delay or interference.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the

Government's policy on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes in the light of the case of Roberts *v.* Rugiero, indicating if he plans any changes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's policy is to encourage farmers to adopt high standards of husbandry through compliance with part I of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 and with regulations and codes of recommendations made under it. We have no plans to change this policy following the private prosecution referred to. However, the Government set up the Farm Animal Welfare Council in 1979 to keep such matters under review, and we will consider introducing further measures where necessary in the light of the Council's advice and the views of interested parties.

EC (Food and Wine Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of special sales of food agreed by the management committee of the European Economic Community; and if he will also detail the tonnages of various foodstuffs, the nations to which the sales have been made and the sale prices expressed in sterling per pound, over the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1986, *c. 48*]: In any period, a large number of sales of food on to the internal market and outside the European Community are arranged through the various sectoral management committees of the European Community. These schemes tend to follow established procedures and there is not a recognised category of special sale. Illustratively, however, the following recent sales have distinguishing features:

Beef

(i) *Regulation 2670/85 of 23 September 1985 (as amended)*

This regulation makes available beef bought into intervention after 31 December 1983 and not less than three months before being taken over by the purchaser. Currently, purchase applications must be for a minimum of 15,000 tonnes (bone-in equivalent) and current prices are as follows:

	ecu/tonne	*£/lb*
Bone-in beef		
Forequarters	1,150	0·32
Hindquarters	2,050	0·59
Boneless beef		
Higher value cuts eligible for export refund	2,450	0·71
Lower value cuts eligible for export refund	1,410	0·41
Lower value cuts not eligible for export refund	475	0·14

Sales are to traders who must export the beef to one of the many destinations for which an export refund is fixed. Information on quantities sold is not available.

(ii) *Regulation 1812/86 of 11 June 1986 (as amended)*

This regulation makes available beef bought into intervention before 1 April 1986 for sale by trader for export to Brazil. Tenders must be for a minimum of 10,000 tonnes; at each adjudication 30 per cent. of the quantities sold must come from Italian stocks and the total must come from at least three member states. 200,000 tonnes have been contracted for so far, at the following prices:

Average sales price

	tonnes	*ecu/tonne*	*£/lb*
France	90,000	502	0·14
Germany	10,000	447	0·13
Italy	70,000	418	0·12
Ireland	10,000	519	0·15
United Kingdom	20,000	436	0·13

Butter

(iii) *Regulation 765/86 of 14 March 1986*

Tonnage of butter sold: 118,000 tonnes

Country of destination: USSR (the regulation provided for sales, so far unrealised, to India and Pakistan.)

Average sale price per lb: £0·60.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information is available to his Department about the recent safety studies made of the graphite-moderated plutonium production nuclear reactors at Hanford, United States of America; what assessment he has made of the implications of these studies for the graphite-moderated plutonium production nuclear reactors operated by British Nuclear Fuels at Chapelcross and Calder Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that the executive summary, dated July 1986, of the United States Department of Energy's technical safety appraisal of the N-reactor at Hanford United States of America concludes that the reactor was being operated in a generally safe and cautious manner by experienced personnel, and outlines recommendations made, mainly to encourage the furtherance of excellence in aspects which it describes as already generally good. The N-reactor at Hanford is a water-cooled tube graphite-moderated reactor, and is therefore significantly different from any British reactor. When the full report is received it will be studied by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the safety record of the British nuclear power industry.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government and the British nuclear industry are fully conscious of the vital importance of both site and environmental safety, and the industry has an excellent safety record. There has never been a nuclear emergency at any of this country's civil nuclear installations.

Atomic Energy Authority (Police)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many people have been arrested for illegal possession of nuclear material off-site from a nuclear facility operated by *(a)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, *(b)* British Nuclear Fuels plc, *(c)* the Central Electricity Generating Board and *(d)* the South of Scotland Electricity Board by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many people have been *(a)* detained and *(b)* arrested by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary since 1976;

(2) how many visitors to the British Nuclear Fuels plc Sellafield site have been detained by the United Kingdom

Atomic Energy Authority police as a result of contravening the site security regulations *(a)* May 1977 to May 1986 and *(b)* May 1986 to October 1986.

Mr. Goodlad: From 1976 up to and including October 1986 the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary have charged 197 individuals with minor theft and other offences. Since records of detention without charge have been required under section 50 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, no one has been so detained by the UKAEAC, and those records which are still held from before that date also show no detentions. Between May 1977 and May 1986 three minor site security incidents at Sellafield were investigated without the persons concerned being either detained or charged. There was one further such incident in the period May 1986 to October 1986 involving a party from a Humberside school, on which I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member on 31 October, column 267.

Plutonium

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) from which countries shipments of plutonium for civil purposes have come to the United Kingdom since 1979; on what dates they took place; and what was the mode of transport employed;

(2) how many shipments of plutonium for civil purposes have been made to the United Kingdom from other countries since 1979; and what was the quantity of plutonium in each shipment; in what form it was shipped; and to what purpose each shipment was put.

Mr. Goodlad: Some 230kg of separated plutonium have, since May 1979, been imported from the following countries in consignments larger than gram quantities:

Austria
Belgium
Federal Republic of Germany
France
Japan
Netherlands
Norway
Switzerland
United States of America

Detailed information relating to the quantities of plutonium received from individual countries, and the frequency and number of shipments, cannot be revealed for reasons of security and commercial sensitivity.

Plutonium is transported by air, sea, rail and road, in full compliance with the relevant national and international regulations.

Nearly all of this plutonium was in fuel pins imported for civil research purposes.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the administrative procedures for authorising shipments to the United Kingdom of plutonium for civil purposes from other countries; and what changes have been made to the procedures since 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: All shipments into the United Kingdom of plutonium for civil nuclear purposes require an import licence under the Import of Goods (Control) Order 1954.

Intergovernmental assurances are, as appropriate, exchanged in line with the United Kingdom's international obligations on non-proliferation.

In November 1984 a standard format was introduced for plutonium trade within the European Community.

Sellafield (School Visit)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 31 October that film and video tapes were handed to unarmed members of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary, if he will state whether armed members of that constabulary dealt with the party at any stage.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by British Nuclear Fuels plc that at no stage was the party dealt with by armed members of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 31 October about schoolchildren at Sellafield, what instructions there are on visiting parties of children; and whether safety and reserve equipment is available to deal with children's sizes.

Mr. Goodlad: British Nuclear Fuels plc advises me that, in carrying out the duties laid on it by law to protect its workers and the public, all visitors to the Sellafield site are accompanied by trained personnel, follow safe routes, and are given individual identifiable film badges to check against the remote possibility of radioactive contamination. Children under 12 have not been allowed on to the site. Respirators are available throughout the site in a variety of sizes, and there are stocks of protective clothing.

Sizewell

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he now expects to receive the Layfield report on Sizewell; and how long after he receives it it will be published.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I have given today to the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn). The report will be published; I shall decide on the date when I have seen and considered it.

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the date when the report of the Sizewell inquiry will be submitted to him.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to the replies*, 19 November, 1985 c *101*, and 13 March, 1986 c. *555*]: I said in March that Sir Frank Layfield, the inspector, hoped to deliver his report on the Sizewell "B" public inquiry to me during September. The inspector has recently reviewed the position and has now informed me that he has not been able to finalise his report as soon as he had hoped. He now intends to deliver his report to me at the end of November or early in December.

As I said on 13 March, when I have received the inspector's report I intend to reach my decision as soon as I possibly can.

Coal Stocks

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total level of coal stocks in south Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: Stocks of undistributed deepmined coal held by British Coal in south Wales on 18 October 1986 were 2·07 million tonnes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, what advice has been given to the Falkland Islands Government concerning the purchase of civilian fisheries protection vessels;

(2) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, what is the total area, expressed in square kilometres, of the 200 miles fisheries limit around the Falkland Islands;

(3) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, what advice has been given to the Falkland Islands Government concerning the number and type of fisheries protection vessels to be used in the policing of the fisheries conservation zone;

(4) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, if the Falkland Islands Government have approached Her Majesty's Government with a request for the leasing of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or DAF(S) fisheries protection vessels;

(5) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, what consultations have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the Falkland Islands Government concerning the acquisition of civilian surveillance aircraft to be used in the policing of the fisheries conservation zone;

(6) what advice Her Majesty's Government have offered to the Falkland Islands Government concerning the policy on and mechanics of inspection and the boarding of fishing vessels operating or fishing inside the fishery conservation zone;

(7) if it is Her Majesty's Government's intention to provide advice to the Falkland Islands Government on the level of penalty appropriate to offences involving breaches of the law relating to fishing; and if he will make a statement;

(8) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, if it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to provide financial assistance to the Falkland Islands Council for the purchase of fisheries protection vessels; and if he will make a statement;

(9) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the Falkland Islands Government concerning the structure, management and financial costs of a fisheries protection service;

(10) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, if British personnel will crew the fisheries protection vessels to be used in the policing of the fisheries conservation zone;

(11) pursuant to the statement of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 323, what advice Her Majesty's Government have given to the Falkland Islands Government concerning the recruitment, selection, training and terms and conditions of employment of officers and crews of the fisheries protection vessels to be used in the policing of the fisheries conservation zone;

(12) if it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to employ vessels of the Royal Navy in conjunction with policing of the Falklands Island fisheries conservation zone from 1 February 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(13) what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the Falkland Islands Government concerning the licensing and total allowable catch limits of fishing activities within the Falkland Islands fisheries conservation zone;

(14) what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the Falkland Islands Government concerning the preferential licensing treatment for the fishing vessels of European Economic Community nations seeking to fish within the Falkland Islands fisheries conservation zone;

(15) which stocks of fish are currently most seriously threatened in the Falkland Islands fisheries conservation zone.

Mr. Eggar: We and the Falkland Islands Government have had close consultations on all aspects of the establishment of a Falkland Islands conservation zone, including the details of enforcement, revenue and licensing. Responsibility for administering the zone will lie with the Falkland Islands Government. The European Commission and the Governments of states interested in fishing within the zone will be approached on the arrangements for issuing licences once the Falkland Islands Government have passed the relevant legislation. Of the three main fish stocks, squid (illex) is under threat. The total sea area of the zone is approximately 65,000 square nautical miles (220,000 square kilometres). Enforcement will be carried out by the Falkland Islands Government using its own civilian fisheries protection vessels and a surveillance aircraft. As my right hon. and learned Friend told the House on 29 October, it is open to the Government to use, in appropriate circumstances, the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force assets currently on patrol in the zone. The two vessels, already earmarked, will be adapted stern freezer trawlers chartered commercially, with British crews, by the Falkland Islands Government using their own resources. The surveillance aircraft will also be chartered commercially. A team of Falkland Islands Government fisheries officers, initially seconded from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will be responsible, under the Falkland Islands Government, for administering and enforcing the licensing regime. The powers of the Falkland Islands fisheries protection officers will be set out in the Falkland Islands Fisheries (Conservation and Management) Ordinance 1986. The ordinance will also set out appropriate penalties.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what replies or representations have been received from the Soviet Government on the question of the establishment of a Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone in reply to Her Majesty's Government's letter of 29 October and previous notifications of intent to establish the zone;

(2) what views the Soviet Government have expressed to Her Majesty's Government on Britain's claim to the right to extend fisheries limits around the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: The Soviet chargé d'affaires delivered a text on 3 November to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in connection with the Secretary of State's message to the Soviet Foreign Minister of 29 October. The contents of the statement are confidential.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions there were with the United States Government prior to the announcement of the new fisheries zone around the Falklands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The United States Government have been kept fully abreast of our increasing concern over the need for effective fisheries conservation measures in the south-west Atlantic. My right hon. and learned Friend sent a message to Secretary of State Shultz on 29 October.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the strength of the fisheries protection fleet planned for the Falklands; when it is expected to be on station; where the crew will be recruited from; what the arrangements will be for supply and relief; and to whom and how the fleet will be directly responsible.

Mr. Eggar: The Falkland Islands Government's fisheries protection resources will consist of two vessels and one surveillance aircraft, which will be in place before the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone comes into effect on 1 February 1987. These assets will be on commercial charter and will have British crews. Arrangements for rotation of crews will be covered in the charter contract. The fisheries protection assets will be under the control of the Falkland Islands Government.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions took place with Governments of member states of the European Community prior to the announcement of the Falklands fisheries zone.

Mr. Eggar: We had been in regular touch with our partners on the question of fisheries in the south-west Atlantic. My right hon. and learned Friend also sent personal messages to his European Community colleagues on 29 October.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the European Economic Community concerning the imposition of a fisheries limit around the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: We have been in regular touch with the Commission and with our partners on the question of fisheries in the south west Atlantic. My right hon. and learned Friend sent personal messages to his European Community colleagues and to the Fisheries Commissioner on 29 October.

Colombia

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Colombia concerning the repression of human rights in that country.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy in Bogota closely monitors the complex human rights situation in Colombia and approached the Colombian authorities directly about our concerns over human rights cases there last month. We have also made our strong views on human rights violations abundantly clear in the various United Nations human rights fora.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Colombia concerning the recent murder of British resident Mr. Heber Marin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy in Bogota has expressed its concern to the Colombian authorities about the murder of Mr. Marin, whose death is still under investigation by the judge appointed to the case. Mr. Marin was formerly granted refugee and resident status in the United Kingdom, but renounced this before returning to Colombia in 1985.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with Colombia.

Mr. Eggar: We enjoy warm relations with the democratic Government of Colombia. A representative of the Government attended the inauguration of President Barco in August 1986.

Visas

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff are employed solely on immigration duties in Her Majesty's Missions in *(a)* India, *(b)* Bangladesh, *(c)* Pakistan, *(d)* Ghana, *(e)* Nigeria and *(f)* Sri Lanka; what is the planned figure; and what are the equivalent figures for the same date of 1985, 1984 and 1983.

Mr. Eggar: The numbers of United Kingdom-based staff directly engaged in determining entry clearance applications are as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*31 October 1986*
India	1 First Secretary 1 Second Secretary 11 Entry clearance officers	As 1983	1 First Secretary 1 Second Secretary 11 Entry clearance officers	1 First Secretary 1 Second Secretary 22 Entry clearance officers
Bangladesh	1 First Secretary 2 Second Secretaries 15 Entry clearance officers	As 1983	1 First Secretary 2 Second Secretaries 15 Entry clearance officers	1 First Secretary 3 Second Secretaries 20 Entry clearance officers
Pakistan	1 First Secretary 2 Second Secretaries 16 Entry clearance officers	As 1983	1 First Secretary 2 Second Secretaries 16 Entry clearance officers	1 First Secretary 4 Second Secretaries 28 Entry clearance officers
Ghana	1 Entry clearance officer	As 1983	As 1983 and 1984	2 Entry clearance officers
Nigeria	4 Entry clearance officers	As 1983	As 1983 and 1984	1 Second Secretary 11 Entry clearance officers
Sri Lanka	1 Entry clearance officer	As 1983	4 Entry clearance officers	1 Second Secretary 3 Entry clearance officers

The staffing levels are kept under constant review and are adjustable as changing circumstances may require.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements for *(a)* translation, *(b)* shelter and *(c)* refreshments are made for visitors to Her Majesty's mission in *(a)* Dacca, *(b)* Islamabad, *(c)* Delhi, *(d)* Calcutta, *(e)* Bombay and *(f)* Colombo who are seeking either visitor visas or entry clearance.

Mr. Eggar: Official interpreters are available to interpret and to translate applicants' documents where necessary at all the posts concerned. I shall write to the hon. Member about the shelter and refreshment facilities that are available.

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has decided on a new level of visa fees.

Mr. Eggar: A new level of fees is to be introduced with effect from 18 November 1986. The relevant Order in Council is now being printed. The principal fees will be as follows:

	£
Single entry visa	20.00
Multiple entry visa	40.00
Settlement and other long-term entry clearance	50.00

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the assistance given by his Department to the British citizens recently expelled from Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Renton: The FCO has given all assistance requested to those British nationals who have had to leave Saudi Arabia recently. The majority left after their contracts with the military hospital had been terminated because they had failed to conform to Saudi customs and laws. We understand that this was a stipulation in their contracts.

In the case of the three British women and two British men who were arrested, consular visits were made while they were being held. The two men were deported on 4 November and the three women were deported on 6 November.

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department is still proposing a pilot study using DNA testing techniques; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. We hope to launch a pilot study soon.

North Atlantic Assembly

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made in the composition of the United Kingdom parliamentary delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) has replaced my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) as a full Member. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) has replaced my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester as an alternate Member of the delegation.

Entry Clearance Applications

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many refusals of entry clearance applications for visitors from Pakistan have been made without reference to the United Kingdom; and in how many such cases the entry clearance officer has been able to make a decision without seeking information from the sponsor or relatives in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: I have been asked to reply.
The information requested is not available centrally.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Office of Fair Trading (Leaflets)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ensure that leaflets available to the public from the Office of Fair Trading are produced in the main ethnic minority languages.

Mr. Howard: No. This is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading and I understand that he will be writing in response to the hon. Member.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the percentage increase since 1956 in the import and export unit values for manufactures, semi-manufactures and finished manufactures and the corresponding figures for the increase in volume and the increase in average values; and if he will give the same figures for the increases since 1966 and 1976.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is given in the table.

United Kingdom trade in manufactures—OTS basis
Percentage change in Unit values, Volume and Average values

	1966-86[1]			*1976-86*[1]		
	UVI	*Volume*	*AVI*	*UVI*	*Volume*	*AVI*
Imports						
Semi-manufactures	+459	+209	+388	+93	+64	+80
Finished manufactures	+481	+686	+401	+93	+133	+87
Total	+468	+398	+399	+93	+100	+85
Exports						
Semi-manufactures	+501	+115	+432	+114	+27	+97
Finished manufactures	+583	+103	+521	+142	+15	+129
Total	+551	+108	+480	+131	+20	+116

[1] First nine months.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Japan, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Norway and Austria the change in the ratio of export unit values for manufactures to the wholesale price of *(a)* manufactures and *(b)* consumer prices between 1956 and 1985, 1966 and 1985 and 1976 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is in the following table:

Ratio of export to producer prices

Percentage changes

	United Kingdom	*USA*	*Japan*	*Sweden*	*Finland*	*Switzerland*	*Norway*	*Austria*
1961 to 1985	+7·0	+15·5	−12·1	−3·7	n.a.	+37·2	−5·8	−33·9
1966 to 1985	+8·5	+14·3	−3·8	+2·9	n.a.	+28·5	+4·0	−26·4
1976 to 1985	−0·1	+4·8	−6·6	−4·0	+4·3	+8·3	+6·7	−10·8

Ratio of export to consumer prices

Percentage changes

	United Kingdom	*USA*	*Japan*	*Sweden*	*Finland*	*Switzerland*	*Norway*	*Austria*
1961 to 1985	−0·8	+3·5	−60·5	−9·2	n.a.	−2·1	−35·4	−44·8
1966 to 1986	+4·1	+6·0	−42·2	+4·7	n.a.	−2·4	−23·7	−35·5
1976 to 1985	−3·2	−5·7	−18·8	−4·6	−3·9	−2·9	−11·2	−17·1

Note:
n.a. = not available.
Source: Compiled from IMF and OECD data.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* Japan, *(d)* France, *(e)* Italy and *(f)* the USA information available on the percentage, to one place of decimals, of imports of finished manufactures to (i) gross domestic product and (ii) manufacturing output in 1956, 1966, 1976 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will provide the same information for exports.

Mr. Alan Clark Information for 1956 is not readily available. Figures for other years are in the following table:

		GDP	*Manufacturing Output*	*GDP*	*Manufacturing Output*
United Kingdom	1966	2·6	9·0	6·7	23·1
	1976	7·0	27·5	9·9	38·9
	1984	10·5	47·6	9·0	40·8
	1985	10·7	..	9·4	..
Federal Republic of Germany[1]	1966	3·2	8·1	9·1	23·0
	1976	5·7	16·6	12·9	37·1
	1984	8·3	26·4	15·2	48·3
	1985	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Japan	1966	0·9	[2]2·8	4·5	[2]13·8
	1976	1·2	3·8	7·5	24·4
	1984	1·3	4·5	10·1	34·1
	1985	1·3	n/a	10·1	n/a
France	1966	3·1	[2]10·5	3·7	[2]12·9
	1976	5·8	21·3	7·3	26·6
	1984	7·2	28·2	8·1	31·9
	1985	7·5	n/a	8·1	n/a
Italy[3]	1966	2·3	8·6	5·8	21·3
	1976	5·0	15·7	10·5	33·3
	1984	5·8	23·6	11·4	46·1
	1985	6·4	n/a	12·0	n/a
United States of America	1966	0·9	3·3	1·7	6·0
	1976	2·5	10·5	3·3	13·6
	1984	4·6	n/a	2·9	n/a
	1985	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Manufacturing includes quarrying
[2] Manufacturing output estimated by OECD
[3] Manufacturing includes Mining and Quarrying
n/a Not readily available
Source: OECD.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the recent visit of the Minister of State to Liverpool.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I visited Liverpool on 30 October 1986. In the morning I visited the English Estates office development, Mercury Court, where I met and addressed

representatives from local industry and commerce. In the afternoon I visited a manufacturer of telecommunications equipment.

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has taken steps to recover or investigate the retention of United Kingdom export documents and export licences held by the United States Department of Commerce in relation to Systime plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. I have no evidence that any such steps are called for, nor have I been asked to take them by the company.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps Her Majesty's Government took to seek to protect United Kingdom sovereignty and to seek to secure the observance of international law in the proceedings in which the United States Government fined Systime plc of Leeds.

Mr. Alan Clark: In line with a request from the company the Government did not intervene in the United States Department of Commerce action against Systime, but a formal protest was made to the United States authorities.

Integrated Development Operations

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many studies for integrated development operations have been completed to date in Britain; and what were the areas concerned.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Integrated operations are a European Community initiative. The European Commission have contributed towards the cost of a number of studies by consultants to examine the possibilities for integrated operations. In Britain, such studies have been completed for:

Strathclyde, Clwyd, Merseyside, Humberside, Bradford and the Isles of Scilly.

In addition, the Welsh Office prepared a pilot document concerning industrial south Wales. Integrated operations have been implemented for Belfast and for the Western Isles of Scotland, but in those cases there were no prior studies by consultants.

Post Office

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the answer of 3 November, he will state the net cash surpluses retained by the Post Office within its business from 1980-81 to 1985-86.

Mr. Pattie: The external financing limits set for the Post Office's postal business and its performance against those limits for the years 1980-81 to 1985-86 are set out in the Post Office report and accounts 1985-86, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the answer of 3 November, he will state *(a)* the destinations and amounts loaned in each case of cash surpluses of the Post Office required by its external financing limits in the years 1980-81 to 1985-86; how much interest has been earned by the Post Office on this money in each year; and if this interest is part of the operating surplus of the Post Office.

Mr. Pattie: Loans of cash surpluses required by negative external financing limits are not separately identified by the Post Office but are included in the generality of lending and borrowing undertaken in the course of its business. Similarly, interest earned on such loans is not separately identified but forms part of the profits generated by the business and reported in the accounts. The total net interest receivable by the postal business in the years 1980-81 to 1985-86 is given in the 1985-86 report and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Lawnmowers

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the location of the nine testing centres he has authorised for testing lawnmowers under the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The names and locations of the listed laboratories are given below. It should also be noted that the laboratories can also undertake on-site testing whenever appropriate.

Acoustics Investigation and Research Organisation Ltd.
Hemel Hempstead

AV Technology Ltd.
Stockport

British Aerospace
Hatfield

British Standards Institute
Hemel Hempstead

Lloyd's Register of Shipping
London

Ricardo Consulting Engineers plc
Shoreham-by-Sea

Sound Research Laboratories Ltd.
Sunbury-on-Thames

Taywood Engineering Ltd.
Southall

Wimpey Laboratories Ltd.
Hayes

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make a statement setting out the means by which he intends to carry out periodic checks of lawnmowers, as provided in section 7 of the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986; what notice he will give of his intention to carry out checks at each location; whether he has powers under the regulations in appropriate circumstances, to force entry to domestic and industrial premises; and to whom he intends to delegate the powers of inspection;

(2) if batch sampling of new lawnmowers will be permitted after the implementing of the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations;

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *382*]: During the negotiation of this directive the United Kingdom view was that noise from lawnmowers was not a problem of sufficient substance to warrant a total harmonisation. However other member states considered it was, and in order to secure agreement so that barriers to trade would be removed, the United Kingdom had to seek a compromise that put the least burden on United Kingdom manufacturers and users.

The compromise reached in respect of member states obligations to verify that lawnmowers conform was that it should be done where possible by means of spot checks. In consequence the implementing regulations do not call for official systematic batch sampling. Nor at this stage is it considered necessary to introduce systematic spot checks. Should such spot checks be considered necessary in the future they would be carried out at manufacturers and importers premises. Section 7 of the Lawnmower (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986 gives the Secretary of State the powers to carry out periodic checks, but it is envisaged that these powers will be exercised only when there are grounds for thinking that a manufacturer or importer is failing to comply with the directive. In such circumstances the inspection would be carried out by officials of the Department of Trade and Industry, assisted if necessary by suitable technical experts. The amount of notice to be given would be a matter for judgment in individual circumstances. The regulations do not give powers of entry and if entry were refused a court order would have to be sought. It is almost inconceivable that entry would be required to domestic premises as the directive refers to the marketing of new equipment which is not an activity generally carried out from such premises.

Contracts for Differences

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the effects of the current draft rules of the Securities Investment Board on certain sections of public trading outside recognised exchanges in contracts for differences; what is his policy in relation to such effects; and what steps he will now take to prevent damage to certain businesses from occurring.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend made representations to the Department on 23 September with respect to I G Index Ltd., supported by another licensed bookmaker City Index Ltd., concerning the anti-competitive effects of the draft rules previously published by the Securities and Investments Board for comment. When rules are submitted as part of the application by the board to become a designated agency under the Financial Services Act, they will be judged against the criteria set out in that legislation.

IBM UK

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to carry out his commitment of 15 July, *Official Report*, column *882*, to request IBM UK to withdraw its letter of 22 December 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: There was no such commitment. The Government long ago made clear their objections to the letter in question.

Computer Companies

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements have been made to enable United States officials to inspect the books of United Kingdom computer companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: None. We are still considering the United States request for visits to check United Kingdom companies' compliance programmes in connection with the new United States distribution licence arrangements.

Cement Imports

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent steps he has taken to protect the British cement industry from the importation of subsidised cement from abroad; what further representations he has made through the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The threat of subsidised cement imports from Greece is being pursued vigorously by the Government. Action is being taken with the European Commission and directly with the Greek Government.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the trade balance in manufactured goods with each of the United Kingdom's six largest export markets, excluding the EEC 12, in 1972 and in 1985; and what were the comparable figures for the six largest exporters of manufactured goods to the United Kingdom, excluding the EEC 12.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

United Kingdom crude balances in trade in manufactures with major non EC(12) trading partners

£ million

		Crude Balance
MAJOR MARKETS		
1985		
1	United States of America	−312
2	Sweden	−495
3	Australia	+907
4	Switzerland	−1,154
5	Canada	+357
6	Saudi Arabia	+899
1972		
1	United States of America	+181
2	Canada	+38
3	Sweden	−13
4	South Africa	+146
5	Australia	+216
6	Switzerland	−115
MAJOR SUPPLIERS		
1985		
1	United States of America	−312
2	Japan	−3,206
3	Switzerland	−1,154
4	Sweden	−495
5	Hong Kong	−247
6	Finland	−565
1972		
1	United States of America	+181

		Crude Balance
2	Switzerland	−115
3	Sweden	−13
4	Canada	+38
5	Japan	−141
6	Hong Kong	−93

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics

System X

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effect of British Telecom's procurement decisions in relation to system X on the level of utilisation of the United Kingdom's telecommunications production capacity.

Mr. Pattie: British Telecom's procurement and the manufacturing capacity necessary to meet its orders are commercial matters for the companies concerned. However, the Director General of Telecommunications, in his report of 23 July 1985 about British Telecom's procurement of digital exchanges, did assess carefully the impact on manufacturers of system X in reaching his view that British Telecom's decision to purchase a second range of digital exchanges was acceptable.

Restrictions in the Professions

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the recent reports of the Director General of Fair Trading on restrictions in the professions.

Mr. Howard: In the past few weeks, the Director General of Fair Trading has published three reports covering respectively: restrictions on the kinds of organisation through which members of professions may offer their services; restrictions on the patent agents' profession; and remaining significant advertising restrictions. With that on advertising and charging rules of the professions serving the construction industry, published earlier this year, they complete the programme of reviews of restrictions in the professions which my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) announced on 23 July 1985.

The report on advertising restrictions concludes that there has been significant liberalisation in this area, particularly in the past four or five years. It concentrates on those professions whose rules have not otherwise been subject to detailed scrutiny. In particular, it recommends that three professions allied to medicine—chiropodists, physiotherapists and osteopaths—remove their present restrictions on advertising. The removal of a minor restriction by the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy is also recommended. The Director General saw no need for a formal recommendation on four accountancy and notaries' bodies, but assumes that their already permissive advertising rules will continue to be relaxed in line with those of the main bodies for their professions. In endorsing these recommendations, I have asked the Director General to discuss their implementation with the bodies concerned.

The report on patent agents recommends the ending of the exclusive right which patent agents, together with solicitors, have to represent inventors in dealing with the Patent Office, and the removal of restrictions on the use of the title "patent agent" and on the form of business in which a patent agent can practise. These recommendations are intended to open the profession to greater competition, and to allow patent agents to enter into partnership with members of other professions to offer a range of protection and exploitation services. The Government are considering these recommendations and, if accepted, they will be included in the legislation implementing the proposals in the White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9712) published in April, which will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time permits. In addition, the report recommends that the Chartered Institute of Patent Agents should end its prohibition of practice through a limited liability company and its severe restriction of advertising by its members, and discontinue its annual charging guide. I have endorsed these recommendations and have asked the director general to discuss the necessary changes with the chartered institute.

The report on restrictions on the kind of organisation through which members of professions may offer their services makes three recommendations directed at Government. One is that Ministers should consider amending any legal restrictions which prevent solicitors from entering into partnership or other forms of association with members of other professions, as a precursor to corresponding alteration of the practice rules of the Law Societies. As regards England and Wales this recommendation is being considered in connection with work on implementing the provisions of the Building Societies Act 1986, for recognised institutions to offer conveyancing. The second, that Ministers should consider whether to permit company auditors to practise in corporate form, is one of the proposals canvassed in the consultative document on the implementtion of the European Communities' 8th company law directive, published on 12 August. Finally, the report that my Department should review the operation of section 716 of the Companies Act 1985 and consider whether any amendment would be justified to avoid unnecessary impediments to multidisciplinary professional partnerships. Under this section, partnerships, with certain exceptions, are limited to 20 persons. However, section 716(3) enables the Secretary of State to exempt from his prohibition partnerships of a specified purpose and description. The Department is prepared in principle to consider application to exempt partnerships consisting of more than one profession. Applications would be examined to ascertain whether a need had been established for exemption, bearing in mind the possible alternative solutions (such as unlimited companies), and whether the disciplines of the professions concerned would provide adequate protection for clients of such partnerships. I welcome these three reports, which together with that published earlier, make an important contribution to the continuing work of removing unjustifiable restrictions in the professions.

Copies of the reports have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Balance of Payments

55. **Mrs. Golding** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the latest balance of payments figures.

56. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the latest balance of payments figures.

57. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the latest balance of payments figures.

58. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the latest balance of payments figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ended September the current account was in surplus by £403 million.

Chemical Exports (Iraq)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the chemicals which are on the restricted list for export to Iraq.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *381*]: Under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985, as amended, a number of chemicals are subject to export control to all destinations. Additionally, three chemicals, viz. chloroethanol, dimethylamine and potassium fluoride, are subject to export control specifically to Iraq and Iran. All controlled chemical products are listed in groups 1, 2A, 3I and 3J of the order, a copy of which is available in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Torness Power Station

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from Edinburgh district council about safety measures at Torness power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such representations.

Nuclear Installations (Training)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will obtain from the South of Scotland Electricity Board a statement on the simulator equipment for the training of managers and staff at each nuclear installation in Scotland, giving *(a)* the name and location of each simulator, *(b)* the date when the simulator became operational for training purposes, *(c)* the cost of the simulator, *(d)* to what extent the simulator reflects the reactor, boilers and turbines of the installation, *(e)* the accuracy of the model of reactor behaviour and *(f)* the range of faults on reactor, boiler and turbine equipment that can be realistically represented on the simulator; and if he will place a copy of the statement in the Library.

Mr. Lang: I shall ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Cervical Screening

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list those health boards which have district-wide computerised cervical cancer call and recall schemes in operation;

(2) if he will list those health boards which do not have district-wide cervical cancer call and recall schemes in operation but which have plans to do so, giving the estimated date of introduction in each case.

Mr. John MacKay: Tayside health board intends to have its computerised cervical cancer call and recall scheme in full operation in early 1987. Grampian health board is currently developing a similar computerised scheme.

In addition the following health boards have various cervical cancer call and recall systems in operation:

Argyll and Clyde Health Board
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board
Borders Health Board
Dumfries and Galloway Health Board
Fife Health Board
Highland Health Board
Lothian Health Board
Shetland Health Board
Western Isles Health Board

Rates

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the proportion of rates in Glasgow and Edinburgh which were borne by business and commercial ratepayers, in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: Information for 1956 and 1960 is not available centrally. The estimated proportions of rates (excluding water rates) borne by commercial subjects in Glasgow and Edinburgh for 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1986 are shown in the table:

Local authority financial year	*Glasgow*	*Edinburgh*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
1970-71	41·4	35·6
1975-76	36·1	34·7
1980-81	39·0	37·7
1986-87	40·2	37·3

Prison Officers

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange an urgent meeting with the general secretary and officers of the Scottish Prison Officers Association to discuss the problems which are arising in several Scottish prisons.

Mr. Lang: My officials keep in close touch with the SPOA and other constituents of the Scottish Prison Service Trade Union Side, on a regular basis. No request has been made for a meeting in respect of recent incidents in Scottish penal establishments, but I hope to meet representatives of the staff association before long.

Peterhead Prison

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the security arrangements at Peterhead prison.

Mr. Lang: Security arrangements at Peterhead prison were enhanced earlier this year. I am satisfied that they are consistent with the level of security required in a maximum security prison.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects that work will commence on the new Peterhead prison; and what is the anticipated completion date.

Mr. Lang: Present plans provide for work on the new Peterhead prison to commence in the spring of 1987 and for the project to be completed in 1990.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the Peterhead branch of the Scottish Prison Officers Association to discuss the proposed new prison in Peterhead.

Mr. Lang: Consultations have already taken place between my officials and the Peterhead branch of the Scottish Prison Officers' Association on the concept and design of the new Peterhead prison. Such discussions will continue as planning proceeds and I will be kept advised of their progress.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now set up a court of inquiry chaired by a senior judge and comprising independent lay assessors to investigate the allegations into brutality at Peterhead prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No. Recent allegations of brutality at Peterhead prison have been general and unsubstantiated by evidence of particular occasions or events. Any allegation of criminal conduct, however, would be referred to the police and procurator fiscal for investigation.

I am asking Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons to pay a further visit to Peterhead prison and to report to me. I note that in his report on the Prison in 1985 he drew attention to the protests against the regime and put them into perspective, including the assaults by inmates on staff and on other inmates.

Under-age Drinking

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of convictions for under-age drinking in the Grampian region, the Banff and Buchan district, and Scotland as a whole in the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and the latest available figures for the current year.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table:

Persons with a charge of under-age drinking proved against them, 1983-86

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	[1] *1986 (January to June)*
Banff and Buchan	6	2	2	6
Grampian	13	7	12	9
Scotland	136	103	77	54

[1] Provisional.

Duke Street Hospital, Glasgow

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if the Greater Glasgow health board has any plans to improve the fire escape provisions for all geriatric wards at Duke Street hospital; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the Greater Glasgow health board has any plans to upgrade those geriatric wards at Duke Street hospital which are currently classed as unsuitable for nurse training to the standards required by the body responsible for nurse training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I understand that the Greater Glasgow health board has approved a scheme for the upgrading of the fire escapes at Duke Street hospital to bring them up to reasonable standards, together with other minor upgrading measures. Further decisions concerning the hospital will await the outcome of the board's strategic review of geriatric services which is expected to be completed early in the new year.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the guidelines for each local authority in Scotland and for Scotland as a whole, for 1987-88; and what were the corresponding guideline figures for 1986-87 and the local authority budgeted figures for 1986-87.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is contained in two Scottish Office circulars, copies of which are held in the House Library. Annex 1 to finance circular 5/1986 shows authorities' guidelines and cash budgets for 1986-87. Appendix 5 to finance circular 6/1986 shows authorities' guidelines for 1987-88; it also shows and explains the adjusted cash budgets for 1986-87 which were a factor in the calculation of those guidelines.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of assisted places scheme pupils in receipt of free school meals; and if he will disaggregate the figures for each participating school.

Mr. John Mackay: The information is as follows:

Number of Assisted Pupils Receiving Free School Meals

	Number
Albyn School for Girls, Aberdeen	1
Belmont House School, Newton Mearns	1
Craigholme School for Girls, glasgow	4
Daniel Stewart's and Melville College, Edinburgh	40
Mary Erskine School, Edinburgh	
George Watson's College, Edinburgh	
Dollar Academy	2
Edinburgh Academy	4
Fernhill School, Glasgow	8
Fettest College, Edinburgh	1
Fort Augustus Abbey School	—
George Heriot's School, Edinburgh	27
Glasgow Academy	8
Glenalmond College, Perthshire	—
Gordonstoun School, Morayshire	—
The High School of Glasgow	—
The High School of Dundee	28
Hutchesons' Grammar School, Glasgow	15
Keil School, Dumbarton	11
Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow	4
Kilgraston, (Convent of the Sacred Heart)	8
Kilquhanity House School, Castle Douglas	17
Laurel Bank School, Glasgow	7
Lomond School, Helensburgh	2
Loretto School, Musselburgh	—
Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh	1
Morrison's Academy, Crieff	4
The Park School, Glasgow	8
Rannoch School, Perthshire	—
Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen	5
Rudolf Steiner School of Edinburgh	2
St. Aloysius' College, Glasgow	16
St. Columba's Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire	7
St. Denis & Cranley School, Edinburgh	—
St. George's School for Girls, Edinburgh	2
St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews	1
St. Margaret's Convent School, Edinburgh	1
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen	—
St. Margaret's School for Girls, (Edinburgh)	4
Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perthshire	—
Wellington School, Ayr	1

	Number
Westbourne School for Girls, Glasgow	21
	[1]261

[1] provisional total for school year 1985-86.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what levels of parental income are laid down for free school meals under the assisted places scheme.

Mr. John MacKay: Charges which would otherwise be made by a participating school in respect of meals provided in the middle of the day are remitted in full if the parents of an assisted pupil are in receipt of supplementary benefit or family income supplement.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the limit of distance a pupil awarded a travel grant under the assisted places scheme may travel.

Mr. John MacKay: There is no prescribed limit of distance related to school travel grants, which are awarded to an eligible pupil where the walking distance between his home and the school exceeds three miles. However, expenditure eligible for grant may be calculated by reference to only a proportion of the distance travelled. Grants are determined in accordance with relevant income.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the travel grants awarded under the assisted places scheme can be awarded *(a)* on a daily basis and *(b)* on a weekly basis; and if such grants involve the cost of daily or weekly railway fares for such travel, respectively.

Mr. John MacKay: The arrangements for the payment of school travel grants under the assisted places scheme are at the discretion of individual schools who may, in the course of, or immediately before the commencement of any school year, make such payments in advance. Schools are expected to ensure that travel expenditure incurred in respect of journeys by public transport is reasonable and takes full advantage of available arrangements for season tickets or reduced or concessionary fares.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing expenditure on *(a)* the assisted places scheme and *(b)* education authority expenditure since 1981-82 using 1981-82 expenditure as a base of 100 in both cases.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

£ thousand

	Assisted places scheme[1]		*Education authority*[2] *(Total gross expenditure)*	
1981-82	799	(100)	1,340,287	(100)
1982-83	1,718	(215)	1,433,572	(107)
1983-84	2,454	(307)	1,495,125	(112)
1984-85	3,298	(413)	1,545,793	(115)
1985-86	[3]4,259	(533)	not yet available	

[1] The figures relate to school years and the high growth rate reflects the gradual build up of the scheme over a 5 year period, financed by resources released by the phasing out of the block maintenance grant arrangements over the same period.
[2] The figures relate to financial years.
[3] Provisional figure.

Education (Expenditure)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express educational expenditure per pupil in Tayside region *(a)* at outturn prices and *(b)* at constant prices in each year since 1982-83; and what are the corresponding figures for Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is given in the table:

Net school expenditure per full-time equivalent pupil (£'s)

Year	*Tayside*		*Scotland*	
	At outturn prices	*At November 1984 prices*	*At outturn prices*	*At November 1984 prices*
1982-83	1,041	1,125	1,069	1,155
1983-84	1,130	1,173	1,155	1,199
1984-85	1,173	1,173	1,223	1,223

Information on 1985-86 expenditure is not yet available.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express educational expenditure per pupil by the former Dundee corporation in 1974-75 and by Tayside education committee in 1984-85 at constant prices.

Mr. John MacKay: In 1974-75, the net school expenditure per full-time equivalent pupil by the former Corporation of the City of Dundee, expressed at November 1984 prices, was £1,077. The corresponding figure for per pupil expenditure by Tayside regional council in 1984-85, also expressed at November 1984 prices, was £1,173.

Job Creation, Dundee

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the total number of jobs that have been created at *(a)* Dundee technology park and *(b)* Dundee enterprise zone since their opening.

Mr. Lang: The report "Enterprise Zone Information 1984-85", published last month, shows that the number of employees in the Tayside enterprise zone at December 1985 was 1,000 compared with 546 at time of designation. The report does not contain employment figures for the individual zone sites in Dundee, but it is estimated that around 190 jobs have been created to date in Dundee technology part.

Social Work Services

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what has been the total amount spent on social work services in Tayside and Scotland per head in each year since 1982-83; and if he will express these figures also at constant prices;

(2) what has been the total amount spent on social work services in Tayside region in each year since 1982-83; and if he will express this expenditure at constant prices.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Social Work Net Expenditure

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Tayside				
Expenditure (actual) £ thousand	19,789	20,567	21,901	24,294
(at November 1985 prices) £ thousand	23,410	23,259	23,701	24,697
Expenditure per head (actual) £	49·92	52·08	55·52	61·61
(at November 1985 prices) £	59·06	58·90	60·08	62·63
Scotland				
Expenditure (actual) £ thousand	260,417	276, 980	291,690	[1]317,074
(at November 1985 prices) £ thousand	308,073	313,237	315,667	[1]322,337
Expenditure per head (actual) £	50·40	53·78	56·69	[1]61·73
(at November 1985 prices) £	59·62	60·82	61·35	[1]62·75

[1] The 1985-86 figures for Scotland are estimates based on incomplete returns.

Dundee and Aberdeen Colleges of Education

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in view of the representations which he has received opposing the proposed merger of Dundee and Aberdeen colleges of education, he will now abandon the proposals.

Mr. John MacKay: No. I welcome the general line of the interim report of the working party set up to consider how the merger should be implemented. That report has shown that a cost-effective institution can be established which will make an important contribution to Scottish education. I hope that all parties concerned will adopt a constructive approach in the interests of the new college.

European Community College of Education

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made as to the suitability of Dundee college of education as the site of the proposed European college of education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The European Parliament's Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport is considering in principle whether a European Community college of education should be established. When and if a definite set of proposals is submitted for consideration by the member states of the Community, I should wish to see Scotland's claims as a suitable location being seriously considered. Dundee college of education has modern facilities which are not at present fully utilised, but that situation may change in the light of the decisions to merge Aberdeen and Dundee colleges of education and to dispose of surplus accommodation throughout the college of education sector as a whole which were announced by my right hon. and learned Friend in his statement on 17 July 1986 at column 1187.

Mental Health (Code of Conduct)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Scottish Home and Health Department is preparing a code of practice under the terms of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Action on the preparation of a code of practice under section 119 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 is in hand, and a draft of the code should be ready to be circulated to interested bodies for their comments by the summer of next year.

Workers Educational Association

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the level of Government financial support to the Workers Educational Association in Scotland in *(a)* recurrent grant aid and *(b)* capital grant for each of the last five years.

Mr. Rifkind: Grants offered to the Workers Educational Association in Scotland for each of the last five years were as follows:

Year	*Recurrent Grant*	*Capital Grant*	*Training/ Supplementary Grants*
	£	£	£
1982-83	133,550	Nil	124
1983-84	140,227	Nil	Nil
1984-85	145,836	Nil	8,964
1985-86	169,500	1,780	27,030
1986-87	184,500	Nil	3,000

Mental Patients

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of patients *(a)* admitted to hospital and *(b)* detained in hospital under sections 18, 24 and 26, respectively, of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984.

Mr. Rifkind: Detailed statistics on the number of patients admitted to hospital under these provisions are published in the annual reports of the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were received into guardianship under Part V of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 in the 12 months immediately following implementation of the Act.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is not available in the form requested; but at the beginning of 1985 there were 84 patients under guardianship. In that year 27 patients were discharged from guardianship and 15 new guardianship orders were made. At the end of 1985 there were thus 72 patients under guardianship in Scotland. Information on patients under guardianship is published in the annual reports of the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland, copies of which are available in the Library.

Carlops and Broughton Bypass

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether plans for by-passing Carlops and Broughton on the A702 trunk road are likely to enter his Department's financial programme in the near future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: There are no plans at present for bypassing Carlops on the A702 trunk road. The need for improvements to this road will be assessed once the results of a study into routes to the south of Edinburgh are known. Broughton is on the A701, which is the responsibility of Borders regional council.

Musselburgh Bypass

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the Musselburgh bypass to be opened.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned friend proposes to open the Musselburgh bypass on Friday 19 December.

Glasgow Airport

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received a request to meet representatives of Glasgow district council and other interested parties to discuss a review of policy on transatlantic flights from Glasgow airport; and what reply he has given.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend received the request on 4 November 1986. We have not yet replied.

Health Expenditure (Tayside)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now consider an increase in the Tayside health board's expenditure to ensure that the 1985-86 spending shows an increase in real terms.

Mr. John MacKay: In 1985-86 Tayside health board was the best funded health board in Scotland in relation to the needs of its area. Refinements to the SHARE system of revenue allocation to make it more sensitive to changes such as population shifts, have resulted in Tayside receiving growth money in the current year.

Education (COSLA Talks)

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on education matters; and what he intends to place on the agenda for those meetings.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend met representatives of the convention on 4 November to discuss the issues arising from the Main report (Cmnd. 9893) on school teachers' pay and conditions.

Teachers (Dispute)

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes to give guidance to Scottish education authorities on their contingency plans in the event of further industrial action in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Not at present. Advice was given to education authorities in March 1985. I am satisfied that education authorities are aware of their statutory duty to secure that there is made for their areas adequate and efficient provision of school education.

Roads

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the trunk road projects on which he expects work to start before the end of 1989.

Mr. Michael Ancram: Start dates for trunk road schemes are subject to a number of uncertainties, including the completion of statutory procedures and the availability of funds. Accordingly my right hon. and learned Friend's normal practice is to announce in the spring of each year only those major schemes which he expects to be ready to start in the following financial year. However, within the category of schemes costing over £5 million, possible starts in the period to the end of 1989 include the following:

M8	Newbridge to Edinburgh
M80	Stepps Bypass
A1	Tower to Dunglass
A7	Dalkeith Bypass
A9	Dornoch Firth crossing
A9	Dunblane Bypass
A68	Dalkeith Bypass
A75	Annan Bypass
A75	Dumfries Bypass
A76	Cumnock and Auchinleck Bypass
A76	New Cumnock Bypass
A77	Ayr Road Route
A78	Ardrossan and Saltcoats Bypass
A82	Luss to Camus Nan Clais
A92	Murcar to Balmedie
(A92)	East Fife Regional Road, Stages 3 and 4
A96	Inverurie Bypass

School Transport

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as the percentage of Scottish schoolchildren who enjoy free transport to school; how this figure compares with the same period in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The school transport survey undertaken in September 1985 showed that 156,294 (18·5 per cent.) of the total pupil population received free school transport. Figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the percentage of Scottish schoolchildren whose parents pay only half of their transport costs to school; how the present figure compares with the same period in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not collected centrally.

Schools Curriculum

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the role of *(a)* head teachers and *(b)* other teachers in determining the curriculum in schools in Scotland and on the extent to which staff and parents should be consulted.

Mr. John MacKay: Head teachers have a responsibility for the management of the curriculum of their school working within the overall policy of the education

authority and guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Arrangements for consulting other members of staff and parents, whether in schools councils or otherwise are matters for local determination.

Teachers (Right to Strike)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to remove from teachers the right to strike; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: We have no such plans.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the weighting of increases in teachers' salaries in favour of those at the bottom of the scale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The question of starting salaries is dealth with at paragraphs 12.19 to 12.22 of the Main report (Cmnd. 9893). My right hon. and learned Friend gave his response to the Main committee's recommendations in his statement of 30 October at columns 475-88.

DEFENCE

Naval Quarters, Yeovil

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many naval quarters in the form of *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats administered by Yeovilton are currently empty in Greenwood road and Wessex road, Yeovil; and for each of the last six months, what was the total number of empty houses or flats and the number of months each had been empty.

Mr. Freeman: There are two houses in Greenwood road and 10 houses in Wessex road which are currently empty. Of those houses, one in Greenwood road and three in Wessex road have been allocated to, and are awaiting occupation by, naval families. There are no empty, Navy-owned flats in either road. Records are not held in a form which would allow the second part of the question to be answered.

Fulbeck (Police Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of the Ministry of Defence police operations at Fulbeck to deal with the protest at NIREX exploratory work.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost has been £70,000.

Nuclear Missiles

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's position on their willingness or otherwise to equip British North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces with US W79 nuclear warheads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 29 October 1986 at column *200*.

Service Houses

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces' houses have remained empty for over one, three, five and 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The number of service houses which have been empty for over one year totals 3,674; of these, 1,022 have been empty for over three years, 564 for over five years and 40 over 10 years.

Yantlet Range (Noise)

Dame Peggy Fenner asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the survey into the noise and effects of demolition practice on the Yantlet range in the Medway is due to commence; and if he will estimate how long it will take.

Mr. Freeman: Contract action for the initial study is in hand. The study itself is expected to take about two months but it will take a little longer to assess the results and to decide on any further action that may be necessary.

Plutonium Shipments

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) from which countries shipments of plutonium for defence purposes have come to the United Kingdom since 1979; on what dates they took place; and what was the mode of transport employed;

(2) how many shipments of plutonium for defence purposes have been made to the United Kingdom from other countries since 1979; what was the quantity of plutonium in each shipment; in what form it was shipped; and to what purpose each shipment was put;

(3) what are the administrative procedures for authorising shipments to the United Kingdom of plutonium for defence purposes from other countries; and what changes have been made to the procedure since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not in the national interest to provide answers to these questions.

Portsmouth (Dredging)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the special dredging works carried out at Portsmouth to enable the USS Iowa to enter the solent on 21 September.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 24 October at column *1008*.

Falklands Garrison

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the latest estimates for the total costs of the Falklands garrison, its supply and maintenance for the financial years *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1986-87 and *(c)* 1987-88.

Mr. Stanley: It is estimated that the total defence costs of the Falklands in 1985-86 including the replacement of equipment lost during the campaign is £572 million of which £397 million is the additional cost of establishing and maintaining the garrison. For 1986-87 and 1987-88 the planned provision for the Falklands amounts to £435 million and £257 million respectively of which £234 million and £140 million relate to the garrison.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current strenght of the Falklands garrison in each category; what is the projected final complement; and what that is expected to be achieved.

Mr. Stanley: It would not be in the public interest to detail the make-up of the forces defending the islands. Force levels in the Falklands reflect the continuing need for a military presence sufficient to deter agression and to defend the islands against attack.

Nuclear Reporting Cells (Royal Observer Corps)

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the Royal Observer Corps in Wales has established any nuclear reporting cells in conjunction with Armed Forces Headquarters;

(2) what are the intended functions of Royal Observer Corps nuclear reporting cells before and after a supposed nuclear attack.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Equestrian Events

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many man days of military personnel time were used in assistance in equestrian events for the last full year.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that the information requested is not readily available from our records.

US Submarines

Mr. Ashdown asked te Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assistance was provided to the United States nuclear submarine Nathaniel Green by the United Kingdom in 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has information on how the United States nuclear ballistic missile submarine Nathaniel Green left United Kingdom water recently; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will detail what information he has received on incidents affecting United States nuclear submarines in United Kingdom waters and especially relating to the United States submarine Nathaniel Green; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 9 May at column *270*. I understand that the USS Nathaniel Green left United Kingdom waters under her own power. We would expect any significant incident affecting United Kingdom interests involving USN nuclear submarines in United Kingdom waters to be reported to my Department by the United States authorities. The only such recent incident concerned the USS Nathaniel Green.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Christmas Bonus

59. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the Christmas bonus paid to retirement pensioners; and if he has any plans to extend it to the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lyell: We have no present plans to increase the Christmas bonus or to extend it to the long-term unemployed. As already announced, the £10 bonus will be paid this year in the first week of December to the same beneficiaries as before.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those regional health authorities that have not forwarded district health authority complete service plans on acquired immune deficiency syndrome as requested in circular HC (86)2; and if he will list those district health authorities that have yet to draw up such plans.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each health authority the number of persons receiving treatment for acquired immune deficiency syndrome for each of the past five years.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what funds Her Majesty's Government have so far *(a)* allocated and *(b)* spent specifically on the fight against acquired immune deficiency syndrome, categorised under (i) research, (ii) public information and education, (iii) additional health care facilities, (iv) support for voluntary agencies and organisations and (v) other aspects.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to the hon. Members.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to whether any persons in the United Kingdom have contracted acquired immune deficiency syndrome following transfusions of infected blood that was not detected in the screening process; and what information he has about the efficacy of the screening process in other countries.

Mr. Newton: The safety of the blood supply in the United Kingdom is maintained in two ways. First, those people who may have been exposed to the AIDS virus are told they must not donate blood. Secondly, as explained in my reply to the hon. Member on 3 November at column *356*, all donations are now tested and no cases of AIDS virus transmission through blood transfusion have been reported since testing was introduced. Comprehensive information on other countries who test blood donations for HIV antibody is not available, but their experience is understood to be comparable.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the regional variation in the incidence of cervical cancer over the last five years; and if he will give, in total and by regional health authority, the number of *(a)* registrations and *(b)* deaths involving cervical cancer in each of those years.

Mrs. Currie: Statistics on the regional variation of the registrations of newly diagnosed cases of carcinoma of cervix uteri (ICD (9) 180) and of carcinoma in situ of cervix uteri (ICD (9) 233.1) for England and Wales for 1978 to 1982 are published in "Cancer Statistics", MB1 Nos. 10-14 copies of which are in the Library. These show the numbers of registrations, the rate per 100,000 population and the standardised registration ratios at age under 75 for each regional health authority in tables 6, 7 and 8 respectively.

Statistics from 1981 to 1984 on the numbers of deaths with an underlying cause of carcinoma of cervix uteri and the standardised mortality ratios (SMR) by regional health authority are shown in table 5 and table 3 respectively "Mortality Statistics: area" DH5 No's 8-11. The number of deaths and the SMR's for 1985 are shown in the tables.

Number of deaths with underlying cause as Carcinoma of Cervix Uteri, (ICD[1](9) 180), England and Wales, and Regional Health Authority (RHA) of usual residence, 1985

	number of deaths
England and Wales	1,957
Area of usual residence	
Wales	139
Northern RHA	147
Yorkshire RHA	177
Trent RHA	191
East Anglian RHA	59
North West Thames RHA	91
North East Thames RHA	130
South East Thames RHA	123
South West Thames RHA	86
Wessex RHA	92
Oxford RHA	73
South Western RHA	129
West Midlands RHA	185
Mersey RHA	148
North Western RHA	183

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Standardised, Mortality Ratios (SMR) for Carcinoma of Cervix Uteri (ICD (9) 180) for 1985.

Area	*Standardised, Mortality Ratios (100)*
England	98
Wales	123
Northern RHA	122
Yorkshire RHA	126
Trent RHA	108
East Anglian RHA	77
North West Thames RHA	70
North East Thames RHA	89
South East Thames RHA	82
South West Thames RHA	70
Wessex RHA	79
Oxford RHA	87
South Western RHA	97
West Midlands RHA	95
Mersey RHA	157
North Western RHA	116

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the incidence of cervical cancer in the United Kingdom compares with that in other countries for which he has information available; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The information given in the table is selected from Chapter 12 of "Cancer Incidence in Five Continents, Volume IV" published by the World Health Organisation and the International Agency for Research on Cancer. It is the latest information currently available. Data for other countries not shown may be found in the volume, a copy of which is in the Library. World Health Organisation expects to publish more up to date figures shortly.

Age-standardised incidence rates (world standard) for carcinoma of cervix uteri ICD (8) 180, selected countries, per 100,000 population

Country	*Rate*	*Year*
Canada, Quebec	10·8	1973-77
United States of America, Seattle	11·0	1974-77
Japan, Fukuoka	19·4	1974-75
Finland	8·5	1971-76
France, Doubs	17·4	1977
Italy, Varese	11·7	1976-77
Norway	19·0	1973-77
United Kingdom, Birmingham	12·0	1973-76
United Kingdom, North Scotland	11·3	1973-77
Australia, New South Wales	12·5	1973-77

Note: For the majority of countries, data are only provided from registries covering regions within the country.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reply to the letter about cervical cancer policy sent to him by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras on 23 September.

Mrs. Currie: I replied to the hon. Member yesterday.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to provide a substantive reply to the questions on cervical cancer by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras due for answer on 29 October.

Mrs. Currie: I am replying to the hon. Member today.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision he proposes to make in his Department's estimates for 1987-88 for financing a three-yearly cervical smear test cycle as recommended by the British Medical Association.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 30 October at column *237*.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those health authorities which have district-wide computerised cervical cancer call and recall schemes in operation.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 29 October 1986, c. *186*]: Regional health authorities' outturn reports on short-term programmes showed that as at 31 March 1986 the following 33 health authorities had implemented computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening:

Barnet
Barnsley
Brent
Bristol and Weston
Central Manchester
Cheltenham and District
Chichester
Croydon
East Dorset
Exeter
Frenchay
Gloucester
Haringey
Harrogate
Hillingdon
Mid-Downs
North Bedfordshire
North Devon
North Manchester
Northumberland
Plymouth
Riverside
Rochdale
Rotherham
Salford
South Bedfordshire
South Manchester
Southmead
Stockport
Torbay
West Dorset
Worcester
Worthing

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those health authorities which do not have district-wide cervical cancer call and recall schemes in operation but which have plans to do so, giving the estimated date of introduction in each case.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 29 October 1986, *c. 186*]: In January this year all health authorities were required to give priority to implementing computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening no later than March 1988. Of the 158 health authorities that had not implemented such systems as at 31 March 1986, 76 planned to do so during 1986-87 and 82 during 1987-88. The information by regional and district health authorities is as follows:

NORTHERN REGION
1986-87
Darlington
East Cumbria
Gateshead
Newcastle
North Tees
North Tyneside
South Tees
South Tyneside
South West Durham
Sunderland
West Cumbria

1987-88
Durham
Hartlepool
North West Durham

YORKSHIRE REGION
1986-87
Airedale
Bradford
Dewsbury
Huddersfield
Leeds Western
Northallerton
Pontefract
Scunthorpe
Wakefield

1987-88
Calderdale
East Yorkshire
Grimsby
Hull
Leeds Eastern
Scarborough
York

TRENT REGION
1986-87
Bassetlaw
Central Nottinghamshire
Leicesterhsire
Nottingham

1987/88
Doncaster
North Derbyshire
North Lincolnshire
Sheffield
South Derbyshire
South Lincolnshire

EAST ANGLIAN REGION
1986/87
Norwich
West Norfolk and Wisbech

1987/88
Cambridge
East Suffolk
Great Yarmouth and Waveney
Huntingdon
Peterborough
West Suffolk

NORTH WEST THAMES REGION
1987/88
Ealing
East Hertfordshire
Harrow
Hounslow and Spelthorne
North Hertfordshire
North West Hertfordshire
Paddington and North Kensington
South West Hertfordshire

NORTH EAST THAMES REGION
1986/87
Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Enfield
Tower Hamlets

1987/88
Basildon and Thurrock
Bloomsbury
City and Hackney
Hampstead
Islington
Mid-Essex
Newham
North East Essex
Redbridge
Southend
Waltham Forest
West Essex

SOUTH EAST THAMES REGION
1987/88
Bexley
Brighton
Bromley
Camberwell
Canterbury and Thanet
Dartford and Gravesham
Eastbourne
Greenwich
Hastings
Lewisham and North Southwark
Maidstone
Medway
South East Kent
Tunbridge Wells
West Lambeth

SOUTH WEST THAMES REGION
1986/87
East Surrey
Kingston and Esher
Mid-Surrey
North West Surrey
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton
South West Surrey
West Surrey and North East Hampshire

1987/88
Merton and Sutton
Wandsworth

WESSEX REGION
1986/87
Basingstoke
Bath
Isle of Wight
Portsmouth
Salisbury
Southampton
Swindon
Winchester

OXFORD REGION
1986/87
Aylesbury Vale
Kettering
Milton Keynes
Northampton
Wycombe

1987/88
East Berkshire
Oxfordshire
West Berkshire

SOUTH WESTERN REGION
1987-88
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
Somerset

WEST MIDLANDS REGION
1986-87
Bromsgrove and Redditch
Central Birmingham
Coventry
East Birmingham
Herefordshire
Kidderminster and District
Mid Staffordshire
North Birmingham
North Staffordshire
North Warwickshire
Sandwell
Solihull
South Birmingham
South East Staffordshire
South Warwickshire
Walsall
West Birmingham

1987-88
Dudley
Rugby
Shropshire
Wolverhampton

MERSEY REGION
1986-87
Chester
Crewe
Halton
Liverpool
Macclesfield
Warrington

1987-88
St. Helens and Knowsley
Southport and Formby
South Sefton
Wirrall

NORTH WESTERN REGION
1986-87
Bolton
Bury
Tameside and Glossop

1987-88
Blackburn
Blackpool
Burnley
Chorley
Lancaster
Oldham
Preston
Trafford
West Lancashire
Wigan

Psychiatric Beds

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what accommodation is planned for long-term patients currently occupying psychiatric beds in district general hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: We have made it clear to health authorities that they must provide suitable in-patient accommodation for all their long-term patients for whom this is more appropriate than community care.

District general hospital psychiatric units are not designed to provide long-stay care and most contain few or no long stay patients. A number of patients admitted by such units will be found, after assessment and short-term treatment, to need continuing care, but those concerned will normally seek to provide this outside hospital, with the help of the social services authorities; they will make arrangements for care in a group home, sheltered lodgings, and so on. The numbers for whom such community care is unsuitable, and who therefore remain as in-patients in the unit, though small, tend gradually to accumulate, and we are anxious that health authorities should give more attention to providing accommodation specifically for this group.

Three districts (Camberwell, Southampton and South Manchester) have already provided such accommodation in the shape of a "hospital hostel" as discussed in the 1975 White Paper – that is, a small hospital unit providing 24-hour nursing supervision in a domestic atmosphere. As a first step we are proposing to arrange one or more seminars early next year so that National Health Service planners can consider the experience of these three districts, and discuss their own plans.

Hypothermia

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for the United Kingdom and for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland separately, the number of cases where hypothermia was mentioned on the death certificate for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and if he will state how many of each annual total were deaths of people aged (a) 65 years and over and (b) 80 years and over.

Mrs. Currie: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many full-time employees earn less than the state minimum benefit level.

Mr. Major: In 1983, the latest date for which information is available, the number of assessment units (as defined for supplementary benefit purposes) headed by a person in full-time employment whose net resources (net earnings, after housing and work expenses) were below their supplementary benefit scale rate was around 130,000. If all the in-work income-related benefits to which they were entitled were claimed and if those ineligible for supplementary benefit are excluded (because they have capital in excess of £3,000), this number would fall to around 90,000.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a regional breakdown for England and Wales using "Low Income Tables" for 1979

and 1983, of the numbers of people who fall below the supplementary benefit level, who are on supplementary be and up to 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit, broken down by economic status, and family type, showing what proportion each group makes up of the particular region's population.

Mr. Major: I regret that the statistics cannot be broken down reliably in the manner requested.

Nurses

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the recruitment of British nurses by Australia and of offers of better pay and career prospects; and if he will take steps to ensure that any such information is considered by the National Health Service management board in the course of its review of the problems of recruiting nurses.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, columns 63-64, if he will *(a)* provide a breakdown of the net 3,010 whole-time equivalent figure for the reduction in nurse learners between 1983-84 and *(b)* provide similar figures for 1984-85.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

Net changes in the numbers of nurse learners in post at 30 September—England

Whole time equivalents

	Registered nurse training net change		*Enrolled nurse training net change*	
	between 1983 and 1984	*between 1984 and 1985*	*between 1983 and 1984*	*between 1984 and 1985*
General[1]	+180	−1,220	−2,460	−2,070
Mental illness	+50	−240	−510	−440
Mental handicap	±0	+40	−270	−250
Midwifery[2]	−10	−360	—	—
Health Visitor	−50	−100	[4]	[4]
District Nurse[3]	+70	+60	—	—
Total	+240	−1,830	−3,240	−2,760

[1]Includes all nurse learners undertaking basic nurse training other than MI and MH and post-registration training except the courses separately identified in the table.
[2]Includes direct entrant midwifery students.
[3]Includes enrolled nurses undertaking district training.
[4]Not applicable.
[5]The figures have been independently rounded to the nearest 10.
Source: DHSS Annual Census of non-medical manpower.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures for numbers of nurses, broken down by category, completing training for every year from 1980 to 1990; and if he will publish comparable figures on the projected increase in demand for nursing staff from health authorities' annual programmes.

Mr. Newton: I regret that not all the information requested is available. Health authorities' plans for nurse training and projected increases in demand for the period up to 1990 are subject to continuing discussion and refinement between regional and district health authorities. Information supplied by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and its predecessor on the number of nurse learners completing training between 1980 and 1986 and projections to 1989 is shown in the table.

Number of nurse learners completing basic nurse training England[1]

Year ended 31 March	*Registered nurse training*	*Enrolled nurse training*
1980	14,041	9,207
1981	14,587	8,985
1982	14,314	9,780
1983	15,013	11,460
1984[2]	11,526	7,113
1985	16,819	9,027
1986	15,515	7,148
1987[3]	14,500	5,050
1988[3]	15,750	4,080
1989[3,4]	15,250	—

[1] Figures prior to 1984 relate to England and Wales.
[2] These figures relate to 9 months only—1 July 1983 to 31 March 1984.
[3] Estimated figures assuming current wastage rates.
[4] Estimates only possible for 3 years for Registered Nurses and 2 years for Enrolled nurses from 1986 (latest available figures on intakes to training).

NHS (Treatment Criteria)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria are used to decide whether treatment is non-urgent for the purposes of National Health Service statistics.

Mr. Newton: The classification of an in-patient waiting list case as urgent or non-urgent is decided by the clinician in charge on the date to which the statistical return relates. The steering group on health services information said in its first report that it may be of use for local purposes to subdivide statistics of patients awaiting admission by clinical urgency of patient but did not recommend that statistics classified by clinical urgency should be collected centrally. From 1 April 1987, when the recommendations of the steering group are implemented, this information will therefore not be collected centrally.

Benefits and Allowances

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the level of the

pensioner addition to housing benefit needs allowance at April 1987 had it been increased in line with changes to the retail price index between May 1985 and September 1986.

Mr. Lyell: The pensioner addition to the housing benefit needs allowance has, in fact, never been linked directly to the retail price index. In the past it has been calculated as a fixed percentage of the single person's needs allowance. Had the movement in RPI between May 1985 and January 1986 and between January and September 1986 respectively been applied at the upratings in July 1986 and April 1987 and the normal rounding convention applied, the addition would have remained at 85p at both upratings.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Greenock and Port Glasgow are in receipt of *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* housing benefit, *(c)* additional heating allowance, *(d)* mobility allowance and *(e)* sickness benefit for the latest available date.

Mr. Lyell: The information is as follows:

Invalidity benefit and sickness benefit: The number of claimants in receipt of invalidity benefit and sickness benefit as at 21 October 1986 (the latest date for which information is available) at the Department's local offices in Greenock and Port Glasgow is as follows:

GREENOCK	4,003
PORT GLASGOW	1,645

Separate records are not kept of the number of claimants in receipt of invalidity and sickness benefit.

Housing benefit: I regret that estimates of the total number of housing benefit recipients in the Inverclyde district council area, which covers Greenock and Port Glasgow, are not available. Neither are estimates of the numbers receiving rate rebate as these are administered by Strathclyde, the regional (rating) authority, which does not routinely break down its case loads by district. Estimates from Inverclyde district council's claim show that about 12,200 households received rent rebates or allowances in 1985-86.

Mobility allowance: Mobility allowance is administered centrally and details are not held locally of the number of beneficiaries in Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Additional heating allowance: These details are not readily available as information is gathered on a sample basis only.

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people received rent relief, rate relief, or housing benefit, in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lyell: Information relating to 1970 and earlier is not available. The information requested for later years is given in the following table:

Estimated recipients of rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates Great Britain, Thousands

	[1]*1975*	[1]*1980*	*1985*
Rent rebates	1,110	1,310	3,650
Rent allowances	180	240	1,010
Rate rebates	2,910	3,340	6,780

[1]*Note*

Housing benefit was not introduced until 1983. It replaced the former DOE rent rebate and allowance, and rate rebate schemes and additionally brought in those who formerly received help for their rent and/or rates through the supplementary benefit scheme. The estimates for 1975 and 1980 only, therefore, reflect those who received help through the DOE schemes.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people had their mobility allowance renewal applications refused during *(a)* the 12-month period prior to the House of Lords' decision Leeds *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services on 25 April 1985 and *(b)* the 12-month period since that date; how many of those in *(b)* above were refused because: (i) their condition had changed and (ii) they were adjudged differently from their original successful claims in the light of the Leeds decision; and how many of those in *(b)* above were (i) severely mentally handicapped, (ii) severely behaviourally disturbed and (iii) with other severe disabilities.

Mr. Major: In the 12 months up to 25 April 1985, 4,360 renewal claims for mobility allowance (16·7 per cent. of the renewal claims decided in that period) were disallowed at the initial stage. The figures for the 12 months after that date were 4,250 and 15·7 per cent. respectively. I regret that records are not maintained of the reasons for disallowance of renewal claims or of the nature of the disability of unsuccessful claimants.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people had their original mobility allowance applications refused during *(a)* the 12-month period prior to the House of Lords' decision Leeds *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services on 25 April 1985 and *(b)* the 12-month period since that date; and of these how many were (i) severely mentally handicapped, (ii) severely behaviourly disturbed and (iii) blind with other severe disabilities.

Mr. Major: In the 12 months up to 25 April 1985, 33,500 initial claims for mobility allowance (30·7 per cent. of the initial claims decided in that period) were disallowed. The figures for the 12 months after that date were 43,600 and 34·8 per cent. respectively.

I regret that records are not maintained of the nature of the disability of unsuccessful claimants.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if local offices of his Department can identify every person receiving supplementary benefit or supplementary pension, who has a dependent child under the age of two years, or is over the age of 65 years, or is in receipt of attendance allowance and mobility allowance.

Mr. Major: The Department's local offices do not keep these statistics. To mount a special exercise to identify every person within these groups would be disproportionately costly.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many extra civil servants he has employed in dealing with outstanding claims for invalid care allowance in respect of married women; and when he anticipates the backlog will be brought down to a similar level of outstanding claims as those pertaining to men and single women.

Mr. Major: The Department has engaged an additional 320 staff to deal with claims for invalid care allowance from married women. Experience with the cases processed so far indicates that the majority of these claims should be cleared by early in the new year.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* his Department's estimate of the number of *(a)* pensioner households, *(b)* families with children, *(c)* other

households, *(d)* local authority tenants and *(e)* private tenants who will (i) suffer a reduction in their housing benefit entitlement, and (ii) lose all entitlement to housing benefit as a result of the change to the rent taper in April 1987; and if he will also give his estimate of the total saving in benefit expenditure which he expects will be made as a result of this change;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* his Department's estimates of the savings in benefit expenditure he expects to make in 1986-87 and 1987-88 as a result of his proposal to increase the main housing benefit needs allowances in July 1986 and April 1987 by the same cash amounts as the retirement pension rather than by the traditional up-rating formula; and if he will also provide an estimate of the total loss in benefit to November 1987 these savings entail for: *(a)* pensioner households, *(b)* single person households, *(c)* couples, *(d)* couples with one child and *(e)* couples with two children.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many workers in the Midlands social security region have claimed disablement benefit during the last 10 years; and how many of those were claiming for injuries assessed at between 1 per cent. and 14 per cent.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, as the Midland social security region was only formed on 12 April 1982.

Between then and 23 September 1986, 95,097 claims for disablement benefit were made. We do not have a regional breakdown either of successful claims or of how many were for disablement below 14 per cent.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the maximum daily amount an unemployed person was allowed to earn without loss of entitlement to unemployment benefit in 1956, 1965, 1975 and 1985; and approximately how many hours' work this represented for a person earning half the national average.

Mr. Lyell: The information requested, based on half national average hourly earnings rates for male manual workers, is given in the table:

	Unemployment benefit earnings limit (per day)	*Approximate number of hours work represented*
1956	33½p	2¼
1965	33½p	1½
1975	75 p	1½
1985	£2.00	1

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the current value of the basic housing benefit needs allowances according to the traditional uprating formula; and what level of average local authority rent, rates and water rates have been used in this calculation.

Mr. Lyell: If the basic housing benefit needs allowances to be implemented from April 1987 were to be calculated now according to the traditional formula, they would be:

Single person	£49·65
Couple	£72·85

The levels of housing costs used to calculate the housing element would be:

average local authority rent	£15·82
average domestic general rates	£ 7·54
average domestic water rates	£ 1·67

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have moved from unemployment to other benefits in the past 12 months.

Mr. Lyell: Precise figures are not available but it is estimated that in any year:

(1) approximately 100,000 people move from unemployment benefit to sickness benefit (and a similar number move from sickness benefit to unemployment benefit);
(2) approximately 10,000 people move from unemployment benefit to retirement pension;
(3) approximately 230,000 people move to supplementary benefit when they have exhausted their entitlement to 312 days of unemployment benefit; and
(4) small numbers move in other circumstances, for example to maternity or widows' benefits, but no reasonable estimates can be made of the numbers involved.

NHS (Staffing)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of consultants, registrars and general practitioners per head of population on a regional basis.

Mr. Newton: Figures are available on the number of hospital medical consultants, registrars and GMPs (excluding dental practitioners) per 100,000 population and are as follows:

Hospital Medical Consultants and Registrars, and General Medical Practioners (England)[1]

Region	*Consultants*	*Registrars*	*General Medical Practitioners*
Northern	29·7	11·48	53·54
Yorkshire	25·34	9·81	54·77
Trent	24·23	11·0	52·25
East Anglian	28·1	8·97	55·99
N W Thames	32·47	15·56	60·99
N E Thames	40·77	16·69	55·48
S E Thames	32·1	12·68	56·05
S W Thames	29·93	11·14	56·27
Wessex	26·09	8·21	57·36
Oxford	27·85	13·05	55·17
South Western	25·89	8·13	63·45
West Midlands	25·35	11·07	54·02
Mersey	27·55	13·51	54·98
North Western	30·12	11·81	53·52
England total	[2]30·25	[2]12·29	[3]55·78

Source: Annual census of doctors : DHSS

Notes

[1] Figures are at 30 September 1985 for consultants and registrars and 1 October 1985 for GMPs.

[2] Includes Special Health Authorities and London Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals.

[3] Includes principals, assistants and trainees.

Pensions

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the upgrading of retirement pensions for British residents in Canada; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Since 1 April 1986 we have replied to about 130 inquiries from hon. Members about the non-payment

of annual upratings to our retirement pensioners living in Canada, some of which included representations in favour of paying such increases. Officers of the Department have also replied to about 40 inquiries and representations on this subject. On 23 April 1986 my predecessor responded to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) when he raised this subject on the motion for the Adjournment of the House (columns 398-404). On the question of progress made towards a social security convention with Canada enabling pensions payable to British pensioners living in Canada to be uprated, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby, (Mr. Wareing) on 22 October at columns *906-7*.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the persons who left the unemployed count by September 1986 following invitation to a restart counselling interview or attendance at such an interview now receive supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: Up to 11 September 1986, the number of people who had left the unemployment count as a result of restart but continued to receive supplementary benefit without being required to be available for employment was 55. In addition, 3,857 people had returned to the unemployment count having previously left following an invitation to, or attendance at, a restart counselling interview. Of these, the majority will be in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Scotland have had their unemployment benefit disallowed as a result of failing to attend an interview for the restart scheme.

Mr. Major: Up to 9 September 1986, the latest date for which figures are available for the national restart scheme, a total of 1,133 people in Scotland had their benefit disallowed as a result of failing to attend an interview. Of these, 21 received only unemployment benefit. The other 1,112 either had supplementary benefit of a combination of both benefits. A further breakdown of the figures is not available.

Departmental Staff

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were employed in the social security office of his Department in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lyell: Comprehensible figures on the total number of staff employed in the Department's local offices are not available before 1966. Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of staff in post
1 April 1970	46,590
1 April 1975	57,700
1 April 1980	64,036
1 April 1986	62,567
1 November 1986	64,899

Vaccine Damage Payments

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the application form for a vaccine damage payment asks for information on *(a)* what vaccine is alleged to have caused the damage and *(b)* when the vaccination took place.

Mr. Lyell: *(a)* Yes. *(b)* Yes.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many vaccine damage payments have been made in each year since payments began which relate to vaccination which was solely or partly for whooping cough; in each year, what were the dates of the whooping cough vaccination related to the awards that were made; and in how many cases each year this information was not available, and why.

Mr. Lyell: The available information is contained in the following tables. Table 1 shows the number of awards of a vaccine damage payment made in each year in which the claimant stated that the vaccination was pertussis or included a pertussis element. Table 2 gives the total number of awards made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979, analysed by year in which the vaccination was stated by the claimant to have taken place.

Information to relate the number of awards in which the claimant stated the vaccination was pertussis or included a pertussis element to the year of vaccination is no readily available and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1

Year in which award was made	*Number of awards in which claimants stated that vaccination was pertussis or included a pertussis element*
1979-80[1]	460
1981	62
1982	30
1983	31
1984	24
1985	25
1986[2]	13

[1] Separate figures are not available.
[2] To 17 October 1986.

Table 2

Year of vaccination stated by claiment	*Total number of awards*
1948	3
49	5
50	8
51	11
52	4
53	12
54	9
55	15
56	15
57	18
58	15
59	25
60	38
61	36
62	46
63	40

Year of vaccination stated by claimant	Total number of awards
64	34
65	43
66	45
67	30
68	49
69	42
70	51
71	46
72	36
73	40
74	22
75	14
76	15
77	9
78	9
79	10
80	9
81	15
82	9
83	2
84	1
85	–
	831

Whooping Cough

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the available statistics regarding the incidence of severe brain damage or death following an attack of the disease of whooping cough.

Mrs. Currie: Statistics are not available year by year on the incidence of severe brain damage following an attack of whooping cough but the national childhood encephalopathy study (1976 to 1979) noted 17 previously normal children from a total of 924 who had a history of whooping cough prior to admission to hospital for acute neurological disease. Reported deaths following whooping cough in England and Wales since 1981 are:

	Number
1981	5
1982	14
1983	5
1984	1
1985	5
[1]1986	4

[1] To 31 October.

Black Report

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *182*, if he is satisfied with the progress and management of studies commissioned to implement recommendations 2 and 3 of the Black report; and when the findings of each study are likely to be received by his Department.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. In studies such as these it is vital that great care be taken to ensure the accuracy of the data collected, even if this results in some delay. According to the latest information received by the Department these studies are expected to be completed by January 1987.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *182*, if he has any plans to increase the funding and resources available for the studies commissioned to implement recommendations 1 to 4 of the Black report; and if he will state the total cost and approximate duration of each study.

Mrs. Currie: No. We have no reason to believe additional funding would speed up completion of these studies. The total cost to the Department and approximate duration estimated for these studies are shown in the table; the recommendations 2 and 3 studies are combined as they have been jointly funded.

	Total Cost £	Duration (years)
Recommendation 1	57,300	3
Recommendation 2	11,000	2
Recommendation 3		3
Recommendation 4	89,600	3

Kidney Patients

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to encourage health authorities to provide facilities for provision of hospital kidney dialysis at night to assist kidney patients to obtain employment.

Mrs. Currie: It is for health authorities to decide how available resources can best be used to provide dialysis services. We would expect the needs of patients, including the requirements of their employment, to be taken into account when patterns of provision are planned.

Mr. J. A. Sandeman Allen

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has completed preparation for the appeal of Mr. J. A. Sandeman Allen, DFM, FCA of Totnes reference 0/M3/20269, against the decision made on 4 March not to increase his war pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Mr. Sandeman Allen's appeal is now with the doctors at Norcross for a medical opinion. The appeal should reach the pensions appeal tribunal shortly.

Children (Homelessness)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the latest available annual figures for the number of children received into care by reason of homelessness; and if he will give this information for England as a whole, and for each local authority area;

(2) what are the latest available figures for the number of children in local authority care where the reason for their admission into care was homelessness; and if he will give this information for England as a whole and for each local authority area.

Mrs. Currie: The latest annual figures available are for the year ending 31 March 1984. The 1985 figures will be available shortly. A child may be taken into care for a number of reasons of which homelessness may be a contributory factor although not identified as a specific cause in the statistics. Information available on children in care where the specific cause is that their family has been made homeless is given in the following table:

Children in care because of homelessness (due to eviction or other cause)

	Number as at 31 March 1984	*Number admitted during year ending 31 March 1984*
ENGLAND	713	244
Local authorities:		
Cleveland	4	0
Cumbria	6	0
Durham	12	4
Northumberland	4	6
Gateshead	3	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	11	8
North Tyneside	7	0
South Tyneside	8	3
Sunderland	3	0
Humberside	9	10
North Yorkshire	10	11
Barnsley	12	3
Doncaster	3	3
Rotherham	2	1
Sheffield	16	1
Bradford	23	18
Calderdale	2	1
Kirklees	9	8
Leeds	3	3
Wakefield	12	1
Cheshire	16	5
Lancashire	21	10
Bolton	2	2
Bury	2	0
Manchester	13	3
Oldham	0	0
Rochdale	5	1
Salford	8	4
Stockport	7	6
Tameside[1]	0	0
Trafford	3	0
Wigan	6	0
Knowsley	4	4
Liverpool	25	2
Sefton	7	2
St. Helens	5	4
Wirral	5	2
Hereford and Worcester	7	0
Salop	15	2
Staffordshire	21	4
Warwickshire	8	0
Birmingham	7	9
Coventry	11	5
Dudley	6	0
Sandwell	3	1
Solihull	1	1
Walsall	6	3
Wolverhampton	4	2
Derbyshire	2	0
Leicestershire	4	0
Lincolnshire	5	3
Northamptonshire	9	1
Nottinghamshire	12	7
Bedfordshire	15	6
Berkshire	14	1
Buckinghamshire	2	0
Cambridgeshire	6	4
Essex	15	4
Hertfordshire	12	2
Norfolk	2	0
Oxfordshire	4	6
Suffolk	8	0
Camden	0	0
Greenwich	0	0
Hackney	5	0
Hammersmith	7	2
Islington[1]	0	2
Kensington	8	1
Lambeth	2	0
Lewisham	1	0
Southwark	2	1
Tower Hamlets[1]	24	1
Wandsworth	5	4
Westminster	4	0
City of London	0	0
Barking	0	2
Barnet	0	0
Bexley	0	2
Brent	3	0
Bromley	4	0
Croydon	5	7
Ealing	5	0
Enfield	0	0
Haringey	5	2
Harrow	1	0
Havering	0	0
Hillingdon	0	1
Hounslow	2	1
Kingston-upon-Thames	0	1
Merton	0	0
Newham	0	0
Redbridge	0	0
Richmond-upon-Thames	0	0
Sutton	2	3
Waltham Forest	0	1
Dorset	13	2
Hampshire	40	2
Isle of Wight	1	1
Kent	13	4
Surrey	3	3
East Sussex	9	1
West Sussex	8	0
Wiltshire	13	0
Avon	12	8
Cornwall	0	0
Devon	20	3
Gloucestershire	5	2
Isles of Scilly[2]		
Somerset	4	0

[1] Estimated from information for earlier years.
[2] Included with Cornwall (LA 902).

NHS (Costs)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the gross annual cost of the National Health Service in its first full year of existence and, allowing for inflation, what is the present expenditure on the service at those prices.

Mr. Newton: The gross annual cost of the National Health Service in Great Britain in 1949-50 was £447 million. At 1949-50 prices, the 1986-87 National Health Service expenditure in Great Britain (£18·75 billion) would have been £1,519 million.

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the estimated fees for the rehabilitation work on the cardiac block of Great Ormond street hospital; and to whom they have been paid or are to be paid;

(2) what fees have been paid or incurred to date, respectively, to counsel, solicitors and expert witnesses in the current litigation about the cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital.

Mrs. Currie: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the estimated cost of equipment for the cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital;

(2) what happened to the equipment valued at £1·84 million originally bought for the cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital; and how much of it is included in the estimated cost of equipment for the rehabilitated block.

Mrs. Currie: Items of equipment originally bought for the cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital have either been redeployed elsewhere in the NHS or stored for use in the rehabilitated cardiac block. Additional equipment is now being purchased for the rehabilitation block at an estimated cost of £2·5 million, this sum being offset by approximately £450,000 received in respect of equipment sold. Expenditure of about £350,000 has been incurred in respect of costs associated with storage, testing and installation of the equipment originally purchased.

Paediatric Nurses

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what evidence he has of vacancies for trained paediatric nurses in hospitals in London and the south-east;

(2) what evidence he has of difficulties in recruiting trained paediatric nurses in hospitals in London and the south-east.

Mr. Newton: Information of this nature is not collected centrally. However, because of concerns about recruitment difficulties, the NHS management board has commissioned a study of the nursing services in London.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate the numbers of vehicles owned by the London ambulance service designed primarily for use in *(a)* emergency, *(b)* non-emergency non-ambulant and *(c)* non-emergency ambulant purposes for each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986, together with the actual or expected mileages covered by vehicles in each category.

Mrs. Currie: The comparison of fleet sizes between the years 1984, 1985, 1986 is difficult because they will vary according to the rate at which vehicles are purchased and disposed of through each year. The current fleet size is as follows:

355—ambulances used on front-line work or for non-emergency "stretcher" journeys.
229—Tail-lift vehicles; these vehicles are needed for "chair-cases", but can also accommodate walking cases.
393—Sitting case vehicles.
977—Total.

Since 1984, the position is reasonably unchanged, with a slight increase in tail-lift vehicles and a slight reduction in sitting-case vehicles.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies he has made, and what evidence he has received, concerning alleged non-appropriate use of the non-emergency ambulance services in London; and by what percentage those calls have changed between 1984 and 1986.

Mrs. Currie: No formal studies have been made, as far as I am aware. The London ambulance service has drawn district health authorities' attention to the criteria set out in HC 78(45) which states:

Ambulance services are required to provide, or arrange, the provision of suitable transport, free of charge, normally to the nearest hospital or treatment centre with hospital based facilities where the necessary treatment can be obtained, to NHS convalscent homes, dentists' surgeries or artificial limb appliances and assessment centres, for any patient (emergency or non-emergency) who is considered by a doctor, dentist or midwife to be medically unfit to travel by other means. Ambulance transport should not be provided for patients whose medical condition does not prevent them from travelling by other means, that is, on foot, by public or private transport (either their own transport or transport provided by relatives, friends or voluntary services). Nor should it be used to convey a person on holiday or on recreational journeys, where the need is based on social or economic grounds, rather than medical.

We have no information on alleged non-appropriate use of non-emergency ambulance transport.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate for each division of the London ambulance service the number of: *(a)* emergency, *(b)* non-emergency non-walking, and *(c)* non-emergency walking patients, carried in each quarter of the years 1984, 1985, and 1986 to date together with the known number of cancelled calls on patients in the non-emergency category and the approximate vehicle mileage for each of the two main categories, together with all respective annual totals for each division, and for the service as a whole.

Mrs. Currie: The information is as follows. No record was kept prior to 1 April 1986 of cancelled journeys.

Emergency Service: Patient and mileage statistics 1984-86

(Thousand patients)
(Thousand miles)

	North west division		*North east division*		*South west division*		*South east division*		*Total*
	Patients	*Mileage*	*Patients*	*Mileage*	*Patients*	*Mileage*	*Patients*	*Mileage*	*Mileage*
1984									
First quarter	34	263	32	243	26	166	21	187	113	859
Second quarter	35	266	32	236	27	168	21	184	115	854
Third quarter	34	268	32	242	26	170	21	184	113	864
Fourth quarter	36	284	34	261	27	177	23	199	120	921
Total	139	1,081	130	982	106	681	86	754	461	3,498

	North west division		North east division		South west division		South east division		Total
	Patients	Mileage	Patients	Mileage	Patients	Mileage	Patients	Mileage	Patients	Mileage
1985										
First quarter	37	290	35	271	27	184	23	208	122	953
Second quarter	35	268	32	251	26	171	22	197	115	887
Third quarter	36	281	32	254	26	176	22	197	116	908
Fourth quarter	38	294	34	266	27	179	23	207	122	946
Total	146	1,133	133	1,042	106	710	90	809	475	3,694
1986										
First quarter	37	292	34	266	29	189	22	203	122	950
Second quarter	34	279	31	244	30	197	20	181	115	901
Third quarter	35	279	30	240	30	196	19	181	115	896

Patient Journeys 1984-86
Non Emergency service (Thousand patient journeys)

	North West Division			North East Division			South West Division			South East Division			Direct Service Total			Indirect service	Total Las
	W	Non W	Total	W	Non W	Total	W	Non W	Total	W	Non W	Total	W	Non W	Total		
1984																	
First quarter	85	44	129	90	65	155	76	44	120	76	61	137	327	214	541	54	595
Second quarter	82	41	123	84	60	144	73	45	118	68	58	126	307	204	511	52	563
Third quarter	80	41	121	83	58	141	72	46	118	68	57	125	303	202	505	52	557
Fourth quarter	76	42	118	82	57	139	72	45	117	69	56	125	299	200	499	54	553
Total	323	168	491	339	240	579	293	180	473	281	232	513	1,236	820	2,056	212	2,268
1985																	
First quarter	73	43	116	82	57	139	70	46	116	70	54	124	295	200	495	58	553
Second quarter	73	39	112	83	56	139	70	45	115	70	56	126	296	196	492	62	554
Third quarter	73	40	113	79	57	136	67	46	113	70	55	125	289	198	487	69	556
Fourth quarter	71	42	113	79	55	134	66	46	112	69	53	122	285	196	481	63	544
Total	290	164	454	323	225	548	273	183	456	279	218	497	1,165	790	1,955	252	2,207
1986																	
First quarter	57	39	96	72	51	123	55	46	101	60	50	110	244	186	430	69	499
Second quarter	39	36	75	65	49	114	40	42	82	33	53	86	177	180	357	92	449
Third quarter	39	38	77	62	50	112	40	41	81	32	58	90	173	187	360	94	454

Notes:
Indirect Services—these figures cannot be split between walker/non walker cases.
Covers hire cars, vehicles on loan and hospital car services.
W = Walking Non W = Non Walking

Patient mileage statistics 1984 to 1986
Non-emergency service

Thousand miles

	North West	North East	South West	South East	Total direct	Indirect service	Total all services
1984							
First quarter	550	551	457	554	2,112	345	2,457
Second quarter	537	518	451	511	2,017	355	2,372
Third quarter	521	506	454	502	1,983	338	2,321
Fourth quarter	515	510	448	512	1,985	374	2,359
Total	2,123	2,085	1,810	2,079	8,097	1,412	9,509
1985							
First quarter	495	507	443	522	1,967	379	2,346
Second quarter	490	499	436	515	1,940	433	2,373
Third quarter	489	481	414	496	1,880	493	2,373
Fourth quarter	498	472	407	497	1,874	470	2,344
Total	1,972	1,959	1,700	2,030	7,661	1,775	9,436
1986							
First quarter	426	444	372	453	1,695	501	2,196
Second quarter	353	403	323	366	1,445	596	2,041
Third quarter	380	401	319	384	1,484	—	—

Mental Illness (Newham)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the rate of mental illness in the London borough of Newham; and what is the national figure.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. Statistics on prevalence of mental illness are not collected centrally, either at local or national level. Newham district health authority does not provide any in-patient care for mental illness, so Newham patients are treated in neighbouring districts.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to make an early statement on the pay and conditions of speech therapists in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: Pay and conditions are a matter for Whitley negotiation. I understand that on 20 October a settlement was conluded which will be put into effect as soon as possible, backdated to 1 April 1986.

Dental Charges

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce proportional dental charges: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Charges for routine dental treatment are already partly based on a proportion of the costs. The possibility of changing to a wholly proportionate system is raised in "Primary Health Care — an Agenda for Discussion" [Cmnd. 9771] which is currently the subject of widespread consultation.

Leaflet NI 247 (Court Judgment)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will revise leaflet NI 247 to take account of the judgment of Mr. Justice Woolf in the Butterworth case to the effect that going to live in the same household as another person to look after them because of illness or disability does not constitute living together as husband and wife; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: No. Leaflet NI 247 reflects the guidance issued by the chief adjudication officer to those adjudication officers who are asked to decide whether couples are living together as husband and wife.

Lorazepam

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the drug lorazepam; whether he is conducting inquiries into its use and effects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Cash Limits

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1986-87.

Mr. Fowler: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the Department of Health and Social Security running cost limit will be increased by £4,200,000 from £1,815,840,000 to £1,820,040,000, and the cash limit on class XV, Vote 5 will be increased by £2,680,000 from £1,171,188,000 — as announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 22 July at columns *143-46* — to £1,173,868,000.

Of the increase in running costs, £4 million represents an increase in the agency payment to the Department of Employment to cover the increased expenditure by the unemployment benefit service reported by my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General on 28 October at column *81*. The remainder represents additional costs to DHSS resulting from Jobstart, one of the employment measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement.

The relevant proportion of these increases will be recovered from the National Insurance Fund; the resulting offset is reflected in the cash limit change.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will announce the rates of statutory sick pay that will apply from April 1987.

Mr. Major: Regulations will shortly be laid before Parliament proposing new rates of statutory sick pay with effect from 6 April 1987. The standard rate will rise from £46·75 to £47·20 per week, and will be payable where an employee's average weekly earnings are £76·50 or more. The lower rate will rise from £31·60 to £32·85 and will be payable where average weekly earnings are between £39 (the lower earnings limit for the payment of national insurance contributions) and £76·49. These represent increases in the rates of 1 per cent. and 4 per cent. respectively. At present 85 per cent. of spells of SSP attract the standard rate with the remaining 15 per cent. being split between the middle and lower rates. Having two rates of SSP applicable to only 15 per cent. of spells of sickness overcomplicates the administration of SSP for employers and does not provide a sensible structure. We propose, therefore, to merge the present middle rate of SSP with the lower rate with effect from 6 April 1987. All recipients of the middle rate at that date will continue to get the current rate of £39·20 until their spell of sickness ends or they reach their maximum entitlement to SSP, whichever is sooner. Following the merger between the two rates, the lower rate is being increased by 1·2 per cent. more than would have been required under a straight prices uprating. Statutory maternity pay will also be set at this higher level on its introduction in April 1987. The regulations bringing these changes in will be subject to affirmative resolution of both Houses.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has yet completed his review of national insurance contributions for 1987-88.

Mr. Fowler: I have completed the annual review under section 120 of the Social Security Act 1975. The proposals will take effect from 6 April 1987.

Employers and Employees

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his statement earlier today, I do not propose to raise the standard rate of contributions for

either employees or employers, which remain at 9 per cent. and 10·45 per cent. respectively. This is the fourth successive year that these have remained unchanged.

In line with the requirements of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, the lower earnings limit for class 1 contributions is to be raised to £39 per week, which is just below the basic retirement pension rate for a single person, which I announced to the House on 22 October. The upper earnings limit is to be raised to £295 per week, which is a little under 7¼ times the new basic pension rate. The new earnings limits replace the current ones of £38 and £285 respectively.

The reduced contribution rates for the lower paid will continue unchanged. The reduced rates of 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. for employees, and 5 per cent., 7 per cent. and 9 per cent. for employers will extend further up the earnings scale and will apply to weekly earnings which fall below the ceilings of £65, £100, and for employers only, £150 (the previous ceilings were £60, £95 and £140 respectively).

Not Contracted-Out Employees and their Employers

Neither the employee nor his employer will have to pay any contributions if his earnings are less than £39 per week. For people earning between £39 and £285 (the former upper earnings limit) there will be no increase for either the employee or the employer. In fact, owing to the increase in the earnings ceilings for the reduced contribution rates, some lower paid employees will pay a slightly smaller contribution, as will their employers. For those employees with earnings above £285 per week, the maximum possible increase will be 90 pence per week. There will be no corresponding increase for employers since there is no upper earnings limit for their contributions.

Contracted-Out Employees and their Employers

Contributions payable by some contracted-out employees and their employers will rise slightly. (The maximum combined increase is 6p a week.) Where earnings are less than the former upper earnings limit of £285 per week, the increase will be very small reflecting the fact that the increase in the lower earnings limit increases the band of earnings on which the non-contracted-out contribution rates are paid. Some lower paid contracted-out employees, and their employers, will in fact have their contributions reduced as a result of the higher earnings ceilings for the reduced contribution rates.

Employees with earnings between the old and new upper earning limits, £285 and £295 respectively, will pay a maximum of 71p a week extra. The increase in the upper earnings limit will extend the contracting out rebate to contributions in respect of earnings between £285 and £295, with corresponding savings for employers.

Self-Employed People

The flat rate class 2 contribution will be rasied by 10p to £3·85 per week.

The rate of class 4 contributions will not be increased. The annual limits of profits between which Class 4 contributions are paid will be raised from £4,450 and £14,820 to £4,590 and £15,340 respectively. The effect of these changes is that, for self-employed people who only pay class 2 contributions, contributions in 1987-88 will be £5·20 per year higher than in the current financial year. For those self-employed people with profits between £4,590 and £14,820 (the former upper profits limit) class 4 contributions will be reduced by £8·82 per year in 1987-88 — assuming an unaltered level of profits. For those self-employed people with profits at or above the proposed upper profits limit of £15,340, class 4 contributions will be £23·94 per year higher in 1987-88.

Class 3 (Voluntary) Contributions

The rate of class 3 contributions is to be raised from £3·65 to £3·75 per week.

Treasury Supplement

The Treasury Supplement to the National Insurance Fund will be reduced from 9 per cent. to 7 per cent. with effect from April 1987.

Employment Protection Allocation

The employment protection allocation, currently 0·25 per cent. for employees and 0·20 per cent. for employers, will be reduced to 0·07 per cent. and 0·06 per cent. respectively from April 1987.

National Health Service Allocation

The allocation to the National Health Service, currently 0·75 per cent. for employees and 0·6 per cent. for employers, will be increased to 0·85 per cent. and 0·7 per cent. respectively from April 1987.

The draft orders and the contributions amendment regulations, which are required to give effect to my proposals, together with the Government Actuary's report on their effect on the National Insurance Fund, will be laid before the House shortly.

Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make an urgent official visit to the regional health authority in the north-west and district health authorities in Manchester to hear about their funding problems and in particular, the closure of hospital wards and the shortage of nursing staff.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 November 1986, c. *476*]: I was at Hope hospital, Salford, yesterday for public consultation on primary care, and expect to visit central Manchester on 12 December to lay the foundation stone for the £30 million redevelopment of the Manchester royal infirmary.

Unemployed Persons (Benefits)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will present a table showing the total payments to, and the number of unemployed people receiving, housing benefit in Great Britain for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to the reply*, 23 May 1986, c. *373-74*]: The information is in the following table.

Unemployed Housing Benefit Recipients: Estimated Caseload and Expenditure

	1979-80[1]	1980-81[1]	1981-82[1]	1982-83[1]	1983-84	Great Britain 1984-85	1985-86
Caseload (thousands)	50	90	140	570	1,400	1,450	1,450
Expenditure (£million)	10	30	60	240	920	1,050	1,150

[1]Housing benefit was introduced for some in November 1982 and for all in April 1983. It replaced the former DOE rent rebate and allowance, and rate rebate schemes. Additionally it brought in those who formerly received help with their rent and rates through supplementary benefit. The estimates before April 1983 relate to the former DOE schemes but reflect the partial start of housing benefit in 1982-83.

Mortgage Assistance

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider introducing legislation requiring mortgage assistance for those on supplementary benefit to be paid direct to the lender rather than the borrower; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to the reply*, 9 June 1986, c. *97*]: I shall consider this suggestion along with the comments I have received from the Social Security Advisory Committee on the draft regulations concerning proposed changes to supplementary benefit payments for mortgage interest. An announcement of the final decision on the changes will be made in due course.

Hospital Beds (Thames Region)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average daily number of available beds by sector in each of the districts of the four Thames regions in each year from 1979; and what were the equivalent figures for each of the years 1974 to 1978.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to the reply* 30 June, 1986, c. *436*]: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. Figures for all the years requested could be provided only at disaproportionate cost. The available information is given in the tables.

Average daily number of available acute[1] beds in the District Health Authorities within the four Thames Regions

District Health Authority	1974	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
North West Thames Regional Health Authority								
North Bedfordshire	501·9	503·4	528·2	498·2	489·7	508·8	505·2	502·3
South Bedfordshire	483·3	468·2	466·5	466·8	467·5	458·6	462·8	476·4
North Hertfordshire	481·1	505·8	504·1	510·3	511·0	507·4	502·5	484·2
East Hertfordshire	450·3	416·4	372·0	369·3	390·5	386·0	388·6	363·8
North West Hertfordshire	479·9	478·1	489·3	489·2	467·0	488·0	485·5	485·0
South West Hertfordshire	623·1	470·9	470·5	468·6	461·5	467·2	467·7	442·9
Barnet	1,401·8	1,231·6	1,132·3	1,105·2	1,107·9	1,046·3	949·4	909·7
Harrow	373·2	559·2	552·9	557·6	567·8	563·2	534·9	556·6
Hillingdon	1,297·1	1,232·8	1,097·2	1,133·4	1,125·6	1,100·9	1,008·9	980·5
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	966·7	931·9	891·3	819·6
Ealing	325·1	241·6	284·2	345·2	374·9	369·3	374·1	372·7
Brent	895·2	528·3	574·3	536·5	537·9	510·9	470·0	456·3
Paddington and North Kensington	1,292·7	1,082·2	1,006·0	963·2	933·7	936·2	921·3	902·7
Riverside[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,498·4	1,453·8	1,387·6	1,299·6
North East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Basildon and Thurrock	665·6	671·2	651·5	677·8	699·5	700·3	698·0	708·4
Mid Essex	599·1	502·3	512·1	511·4	522·9	540·3	533·7	614·6
North East Essex	1,027·0	924·4	928·6	897·9	862·1	806·1	824·1	644·6
West Essex	833·3	683·5	634·1	645·8	649·4	649·7	632·3	614·1
Southend	623·3	633·6	639·1	648·4	671·1	656·7	670·0	646·3
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	1,607·9	1,437·0	1,411·2	1,382·5	1,312·2	1,300·4	1,278·5	1,215·6
Hampstead	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	747·5	743·7	745·1	742·3
Bloomsbury	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,981·4	1,975·0	1,837·2	1,641·3
Islington	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	815·1	751·6	656·5	584·8
City and Hackney	1,639·9	1,325·1	1,244·0	1,242·9	1,223·2	1,214·8	1,189·3	1,096·2
Newham	937·3	761·1	744·5	740·3	668·7	587·0	534·6	523·4
Tower Hamlets	1,324·5	1,007·4	897·3	937·4	925·9	896·3	866·6	856·5
Enfield	697·7	678·5	652·9	598·8	598·5	591·8	547·4	539·2
Haringey	988·8	878·2	773·9	793·1	799·3	749·2	688·6	636·3
Redbridge	445·3	414·7	427·7	432·4	424·2	427·8	427·8	443·3
Waltham Forest	1,226·4	1,000·7	969·9	927·6	949·5	873·3	776·7	754·7
South East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Brighton	1,302·0	1,183·9	1,125·8	1,053·8	1,063·6	1,036·8	1,065·3	1,032·2
Eastbourne	384·3	465·6	466·8	472·6	470·3	468·3	464·5	447·6
Hastings	557·2	520·6	479·7	434·3	457·0	457·9	459·7	456·8
South East Kent	557·2	549·2	596·5	615·9	611·8	592·9	568·7	558·9

District Health Authority	*1974*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Canterbury and Thanet	1,096·8	990·2	942·3	908·3	916·2	879·8	840·7	771·6
Dartford and Gravesham	818·0	661·0	664·0	655·7	646·4	593·8	567·8	565·5
Maidstone	444·4	414·7	423·7	401·0	401·6	418·9	373·5	389·4
Medway	594·8	569·8	564·2	565·6	574·5	572·3	611·2	598·2
Tunbridge Wells	901·8	829·4	834·2	838·7	845·5	816·2	808·0	775·5
Bexley	366·9	391·6	388·3	370·2	357·9	358·9	348·9	339·2
Greenwich	1,356·2	1,074·1	1,011·3	992·4	971·2	986·9	972·8	958·9
Bromley	1,042·0	879·2	830·3	818·2	812·8	786·5	687·5	676·4
West Lambeth	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	829·3	876·6	833·3	811·9
Camberwell	1,052·0	968·4	912·5	903·0	905·0	900·1	861·1	854·5
Lewisham and North Southwark	2,180·0	1,703·9	1,589·8	1,520·4	1,443·6	1,470·9	1,323·3	1,273·2
South West Thames Regional Health Authority								
North West Surrey	553·5	543·6	549·2	567·7	562·7	544·4	537·9	514·1
West Surrey and NE Hants	447·1	456·8	505·4	455·5	459·4	442·8	457·2	465·5
South West Surrey	794·5	567·3	560·0	561·5	578·6	573·2	562·3	552·9
Mid Surrey	468·2	462·0	445·4	376·8	414·7	416·4	421·2	411·9
East Surrey	608·6	584·1	536·8	547·7	546·0	510·4	449·3	437·3
Chichester	503·9	413·7	420·8	422·9	414·6	412·2	413·3	409·5
Mid Downs	552·1	524·9	509·1	529·0	568·7	575·9	566·7	562·1
Worthing	220·0	494·8	518·2	531·4	523·2	533·3	520·6	519·6
Croydon	773·0	648·4	621·6	620·5	616·2	610·4	571·2	566·2
Kingston and Esher	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	523·9	511·4	502·9	493·3
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	408·7	426·2	397·7	374·5
Wandsworth	1,588·0	1,343·9	1,158·9	1,122·6	1,108·8	1,125·9	1,152·0	1,019·9
Merton and Sutton	1,178·5	954·9	929·2	901·8	834·4	849·5	833·4	804·4

[1] Acute sector is all specialties excluding geriatrics, units for younger disabled, maternity, mental handicap and mental illness.
[2] Prior to 1985, Victoria District Health Authority and Hammersmith and Fulham District Health Authority.
n/a Comparable figures are not available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Average daily number of available geriatric beds in the District Health Authorities within the four Thames Regions

District Health Authority	*1974*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
North West Thames Regional Health Authority								
North Bedfordshire	211·2	217·0	225·7	232·7	238·7	235·1	233·5	240·6
South Bedfordshire	207·0	177·7	182·7	201·8	200·1	193·2	198·9	199·3
North Hertfordshire	188·0	201·0	201·0	200·8	201·0	201·1	201·0	203·1
East Hertfordshire	232·5	232·9	225·6	220·8	219·5	204·8	208·2	198·9
North West Hertfordshire	195·0	182·4	188·9	182·7	180·8	183·3	211·5	230·1
South West Hertfordshire	338·4	308·0	289·8	267·4	281·0	285·0	282·9	272·6
Barnet	377·5	313·4	386·3	403·4	413·3	407·5	434·1	440·1
Harrow	129·2	158·6	157·5	157·1	157·3	159·0	158·3	156·8
Hillingdon	212·5	229·7	237·0	247·8	252·0	252·0	251·0	252·2
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	283·1	284·8	287·4	300·0
Ealing	122·0	125·6	138·0	152·7	156·9	157·5	158·4	157·9
Brent	236·0	281·6	278·9	291·5	287·6	285·6	287·9	286·7
Paddington and North Kensington	157·7	146·1	144·8	147·3	154·8	149·7	150·5	157·5
Riverside[1]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	339·9	330·1	316·6	321·0
North East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Basildon and Thurrock	162·7	208·2	203·8	235·4	266·0	277·1	282·3	276·8
Mid Essex	344·2	316·9	317·4	318·7	318·6	315·5	317·4	413·6
North East Essex	362·7	365·7	366·4	367·0	361·5	356·8	364·6	345·6
West Essex	190·6	253·6	252·7	252·4	254·9	268·1	278·5	279·4
Southend	332·7	347·4	349·0	350·4	350·6	347·7	344·6	336·9
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	510·2	532·1	540·6	538·2	538·7	535·0	535·5	544·7
Hampstead	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	133·9	135·5	132·8	130·5
Bloomsbury	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	226·3	228·5	225·4	218·0
Islington	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	167·3	178·2	188·3	170·5
City and Hackney	345·6	334·7	293·7	174·2	338·0	337·9	329·7	312·0
Newham	83·5	91·0	93·0	110·1	131·8	172·4	256·6	254·1
Tower Hamlets	244·7	292·9	307·5	396·0	232·0	232·0	235·4	235·6
Enfield	358·9	269·0	256·3	243·4	235·9	235·4	234·0	234·2
Haringey	215·3	213·0	212·5	212·8	212·8	213·0	211·9	211·4

District Health Authority	1974	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Redbridge	234·3	274·4	277·7	277·9	264·3	274·2	275·5	275·7
Waltham Forest	545·4	506·3	519·3	532·4	522·3	466·6	422·7	397·1
South East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Brighton	453·2	416·0	420·1	422·4	421·9	442·6	417·6	356·8
Eastbourne	348·7	348·1	338·9	330·8	318·7	314·3	308·4	314·1
Hastings	266·5	261·4	261·9	267·6	266·2	266·9	265·0	264·8
South East Kent	374·1	332·5	347·3	343·5	353·4	354·8	353·5	346·2
Canterbury and Thanet	525·7	528·0	509·3	503·4	512·6	514·1	483·1	456·5
Dartford and Gravesham	261·0	240·6	247·7	243·9	244·5	240·7	212·0	210·2
Maidstone	208·6	175·3	181·7	187·5	197·0	180·8	177·7	176·8
Medway	241·0	226·0	226·0	220·0	224·7	226·3	235·4	240·0
Tunbridge Wells	191·3	221·4	223·7	223·5	222·2	239·6	243·2	247·7
Bexley	47·2	118·5	135·3	135·9	134·9	134·0	126·1	129·8
Greenwich	326·3	411·1	369·8	347·9	356·3	356·5	350·4	344·6
Bromley	364·3	345·1	349·9	348·0	352·0	335·0	297·1	265·4
West Lambeth	155·0	173·9	171·6	170·4	171·9	171·8	173·9	170·2
Camberwell	318·0	224·9	215·1	210·3	210·3	207·5	191·7	202·6
Lewisham and North Southwark	262·4	261·3	249·0	252·9	250·2	248·0	253·3	259·4
South West Thames Regional Health Authority								
North West Surrey	219·8	169·8	165·4	201·1	205·0	205·3	186·0	185·8
West Surrey and NE Hants	144·6	214·7	212·0	213·1	217·3	218·3	218·3	217·8
South West Surrey	148·4	171·7	172·5	172·3	172·3	171·5	162·4	153·3
Mid Surrey	268·2	232·0	229·9	223·0	223·0	225·1	215·4	189·0
East Surrey	249·4	262·0	250·5	249·3	250·5	252·0	247·1	254·9
Chichester	118·8	132·7	122·4	131·2	140·8	147·0	146·4	144·1
Mid Downs	130·3	73·1	84·6	118·1	161·1	168·1	164·4	174·7
Worthing	488·1	317·0	304·3	319·3	325·9	334·0	342·0	347·7
Croydon	416·6	410·7	412·0	400·4	402·0	392·3	368·6	357·3
Kingston and Esher	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	138·0	138·0	147·1	142·4
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	295·8	293·9	278·3	251·7
Wandsworth	313·0	235·0	239·0	195·6	194·3	182·6	194·4	190·2
Merton and Sutton	289·2	303·3	285·8	281·4	338·0	306·4	305·0	297·6

[1] Prior to 1985, Victoria District Health Authority and Hammersmith and Fulham District Health Authority.
n/a Comparable figures are not available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Average daily number of available mental illness beds in the District Health Authorities within the four Thames Regions

District Health Authority	1974	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
North West Thames Regional Health Authority								
North Bedfordshire	1·8	68·0	68·6	67·4	69·0	68·7	68·6	68·4
South Bedfordshire	1,241·0	865·8	863·6	846·7	827·3	821·1	759·3	747·2
North Hertfordshire	62·3	70·8	75·0	75·0	75·0	75·0	75·0	75·0
East Hertfordshire	82·5	73·7	59·8	79·2	88·9	87·8	75·5	75·9
North West Hertfordshire	649·1	546·0	548·0	522·0	522·0	504·3	500·0	493·6
South West Hertfordshire	—	83·0	83·0	65·2	61·0	61·0	54·0	54·1
Barnet	1,555·0	1,101·6	1,090·8	1,073·7	1,034·6	1,028·4	987·0	920·3
Harrow	30·0	69·0	66·3	69·6	83·7	84·1	83·3	85·4
Hillingdon	54·0	54·9	54·5	54·4	53·5	54·0	54·0	54·0
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	155·0	157·0	158·2	154·3
Ealing	1,740·3	1,274·7	1,223·7	1,187·7	1,135·8	1,070·6	1,025·8	948·8
Brent	1,595·0	1,375·6	1,349·6	1,294·2	1,288·7	1,246·0	1,140·9	1,036·0
Paddington and North Kensington	32·7	53·5	56·0	56·0	56·0	52·8	44·0	80·5
Riverside[1]	119·0	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,009·2	1,963·8	1,907·1	1,748·1
North East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Basildon and Thurrock	2·1	81·3	117·0	118·0	118·0	118·0	118·0	129·3
Mid Essex	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North East Essex	1,080·3	944·7	906·5	843·1	814·7	777·1	736·1	687·3
West Essex	66·0	152·0	139·9	145·1	167·8	161·0	157·7	160·3
Southend	939·0	845·5	839·2	812·2	806·2	814·5	784·8	695·3
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	1,401·0	1,015·4	984·3	962·8	946·5	907·1	882·0	839·1
Hampstead	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,024·9	982·6	959·5	945·4
Bloomsbury	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	162·9	169·8	167·0	168·1
Islington	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	90·0	90·0	90·0	90·0
City and Hackney	108·3	157·5	156·1	157·5	172·2	178·7	180·7	193·9
Newham	0·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·0

District Health Authority	1974	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Tower Hamlets	161·3	160·2	159·7	157·6	171·3	172·0	167·0	168·6
Enfield	—	101·5	116·0	104·7	96·1	116·1	118·4	115·0
Haringey	50·6	51·2	44·1	42·8	46·1	52·0	49·5	60·7
Redbridge	919·5	830·1	817·0	805·6	810·9	812·3	797·4	770·2
Waltham Forest	1,653·1	1,406·1	1,426·5	1,383·8	1,254·2	1,102·1	1,132·9	1,029·7
South East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Brighton	110·9	100·2	113·4	115·3	127·0	142.3	132·2	142·7
Eastbourne	787·1	711·0	719·0	727·0	697·1	636·9	548·0	473·6
Hastings	—	4·9	7·9	7·8	8·2	7·9	7·9	7·9
South East Kent	—	—	—	—	—	12·0	12·0	32·0
Canterbury and Thanet	1,302·3	987·8	977·3	950·5	918·6	909·3	835·4	807·6
Dartford and Gravesham	689·5	549·5	512·0	512·0	512·9	509·2	486·2	448·3
Maidstone	1,295·6	975·5	916·9	916·5	915·4	905·5	891·5	829·7
Medway	35·3	58·2	56·0	51·7	56·0	56·0	56·0	56·0
Tunbridge Wells	104·0	87·2	82·7	77·6	77·1	79·0	79·0	79·1
Bexley	1,405·0	1,065·1	1,064·7	1,051·0	1,015·7	975·0	907·0	865·2
Greenwich	2·2	52·6	52·5	51·6	51·7	52·3	52·1	51·3
Bromley	1,569·1	1,200·4	1,148·0	1,142·4	1,047·8	1,010·5	963·1	888·1
West Lambeth	58·9	1,067·0	1,029·2	1,020·6	1,004·8	986·2	978·6	925·5
Camberwell	124·7	120·2	123·3	105·9	61·7	61·4	70·2	97·1
Lewisham and North Southwark	50·0	135·5	130·8	131·0	139·7	129·4	150·6	181·5
South West Thames Regional Health Authority								
North West Surrey	462·5	340·0	261·6	169·0	169·0	169·0	169·0	217·0
West Surrey and NE Hants	1,257·5	959·8	938·3	896·0	880·0	880·0	880·1	880·0
South West Surrey	—	—	23·6	79·6	90·8	90·0	90·0	90·0
Mid Surrey	1,490·9	1,183·8	1,128·6	985·0	934·2	884·7	815·5	806·1
East Surrey	1,229·0	1,054·6	1,005·0	961·7	923·4	880·1	780·0	718·0
Chichester	748·1	609·0	601·0	596·8	582·1	566·2	544·3	526·5
Mid Downs	757·4	532·7	547·3	563·5	538·9	554·1	511·9	512·0
Worthing	—	—	—	—	—	16·4	23·6	33·2
Croydon	793·9	554·0	554·0	536·9	490·5	487·0	486·6	470·7
Kingston and Esher	na	na	na	na	839·3	805·8	746·8	721·6
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	na	na	na	na	37·7	38·0	37·2	37·5
Wandsworth	2,218·3	1,183·0	1,148·2	1,082·0	1,023·8	1,028·4	1,025·2	999·2
Merton and Sutton	157·4	191·5	191·8	189·0	184·7	185·1	184·8	184·6

[1] Prior to 1985, Victoria District Health Authority and Hammersmith and Fulham District Health Authority.
n/a Comparable figures are not available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Average daily number of available mental handicap beds in the District Health Authorities within the four Thames Regions

District Health Authority	1974	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
North West Thames Regional Health Authority								
North Bedfordshire	457·0	369·0	369·0	367·7	364·0	367·8	354·8	348·2
South Bedfordshire	—	48·0	41·5	40·8	40·0	38·3	32·5	39·6
North Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North West Hertfordshire	2,281·0	1,996·8	1,999·0	1,999·0	1,994·0	1,916·5	1,905·0	1,890·0
South West Hertfordshire	1,759·8	1,443·0	1,384·0	1,356·0	1,356·0	1,286·3	1,243·0	1,216·0
Barnet	30·0	29·5	28·0	30·7	31·0	31·0	31·0	30·0
Harrow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n/a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ealing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brent	62·0	76·1	82·3	90·0	90·6	91·2	92·0	92·0
Paddington and North Kensington	—	—	—	—	9·3	11·0	11·0	11·0
Riverside[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Basildon and Thurrock	948·0	789·0	768·0	752·0	740·4	742·3	747·6	692·9
Mid Essex	349·8	339·6	325·9	309·1	297·9	293·3	294·5	279·8
North East Essex	1,255·3	1,028·3	925·3	911·4	906·5	910·4	808·7	763·4
West Essex	70·0	47·0	47·0	47·0	47·0	47·0	47·0	47·0
Southend	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	153·0	153·0	153·0	153·0	152·0	145·0	145·0	145·6

District Health Authority	1974	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Hampstead	n/a	—	—	—	—	—	0·2	—
Bloomsbury	n/a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islington	n/a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
City and Hackney	44·7	46·0	46·5	54·0	46·0	46·0	46·2	46·0
Newham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15·0
Tower Hamlets	10·1	11·9	11·9	12·0	12·2	2·3	—	—
Enfield	36·2	89·3	93·7	94·0	56·4	64·3	70·9	76·3
Haringey	—	—	—	—	3·8	8·0	8·0	7·3
Redbridge	18·5	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0
Waltham Forest	332·0	294·0	294·0	294·0	221·5	234·4	227·6	219·5
South East Thames Regional Health Authority								
Brighton	122·0	134·7	129·7	116·9	120·0	120·0	120·0	111·3
Eastbourne	150·0	140·0	135·4	121·5	124·0	124·0	117·0	106·0
Hastings	253·3	224·8	224·2	225·0	225·0	184·5	157·0	134·5
South East Kent	39·0	39·0	13·5	36·0	36·0	47·5	52·5	46·0
Canterbury and Thanet	296·3	290·6	280·2	273·0	273·0	267·0	245·2	221·3
Dartford and Gravesham	1,542·0	1,054·0	1,000·3	939·0	926·3	827·4	739·9	651·9
Maidstone	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	92·9
Medway	—	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0
Tunbridge Wells	1,257·0	1,180·5	1,154·5	1,101·7	1,032·8	993·5	960·4	853·1
Bexley	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greenwich	94·0	118·0	111·2	110·0	98·0	94·0	86·0	73·4
Bromley	3·8	52·2	57·4	66·0	78·0	78·6	82·2	73·0
West Lambeth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Camberwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	60·2	61·0	92·0	116·0	165·0	164·3	163·0	163·0
South West Thames Regional Health Authority								
North West Surrey	1,142·8	978·2	944·8	943·5	939·1	931·0	902·3	726·2
West Surrey and NE Hants	—	46·0	52·5	82·0	82·0	82·0	107·8	139·3
South West Surrey	53·1	57·0	55·0	55·0	55·0	55·0	55·0	55·0
Mid Surrey	1,042·0	963·5	968·2	943·9	944·9	877·0	840·6	809·5
East Surrey	722·0	819·0	818·1	782·2	739·5	747·0	747·0	717·0
Chichester	—	40·0	40·0	40·0	40·0	40·0	40·0	40·0
Mid Downs	532·0	331·2	314·0	303·6	272·7	272·0	272·0	272·0
Worthing	—	47·9	46·8	46·0	46·0	46·0	46·0	46·0
Croydon	1,731·0	1,466·6	1,394·9	1,346·3	1,309·1	1,275·8	1,224·3	1,164·2
Kingston and Esher	n/a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	199·0	174 8	167·0	167·0
Wandsworth	—	16·3	33·0	40·0	45·7	53·8	48·2	48·0
Merton and Sutton	1,161·9	1,114·3	1,079·4	1,029·5	1,032·9	1,041·2	995·5	975·9

[1] Prior to 1985, Victoria District Health Authority and Hammersmith and Fulham District Health Authority.
n/a Comparable figures are not available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the latest figures for the percentage of in-patient cases that have to wait for longer than one year in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the West Midlands region, *(c)* the four Thames regions, *(d)* the North Staffordshire district health authority and *(e)* the district health authorities with the highest and lowest percentage figures in the West Midlands region;

(2) if he will give the latest figures for the percentage of urgent in-patient cases that have to wait for longer than one month in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the West Midlands region, *(c)* the four Thames regions, *(d)* the North Staffordshire district health authority and *(e)* the district health authorities with the highest and lowest percentage figures in the West Midlands region.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1986, c. *977-8*]: I regret I cannot give the right hon. Member all the information in the exact form requested. The available information is given in the table. Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

NHS Hospitals in-patient waiting list at 30 September 1985

	Urgent cases on list for more than one month		Non-urgent cases on list for more than one year	
Health Authorities	Number	Percentage of all urgent cases	Number	Percentage of all cases
West Midlands Region	3,230	67·2	23,540	29·1
Lowest[1] District Health Authority	0	0 (Walsall)[2]		
	0	0 (Kidderminster)[2]	119	9·5 (Kidderminster)

Health Authorities	Urgent cases on list for more than one month: Number	Urgent cases on list for more than one month: Percentage of all urgent cases	Non-urgent cases on list for more than one year: Number	Non-urgent cases on list for more than one year: Percentage of all cases
Highest[1] District Health Authority	3	100·0 (Solihull)[2]	3,479	47·0 (Sth. Birmingham)
North Staffordshire District	635	75·6	3,884	36·5
North West Thames Region	1,878	69·7	8,811	21·9
North East Thames Region	4,360	69·0	15,308	23·1
South East Thames Region	2,178	68·5	10,474	20·9
South West Thames Region	2,548	69·3	8,049	21·9
England	28,183	65·4	160,227	24·2

[1] In terms of percentage of patients.
[2] Lowest/highest of the 19 districts in West Midlands with urgent cases.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a list of district health authorities in rank order according to the percentage figure of in-patients who have had to wait for over a year for treatment;

(2) if he will publish a list of district health authorities in rank order according to the percentage of urgent in-patient cases who have had to wait for over a month.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1986, c. *978*]: The information requested is given in the tables. It should not be interpreted in any sense as a simple league table because circumstances vary from one district health authority to another.

District health authorities listed in order of the percentage of urgent cases waiting over a month at 30 September 1985

District health authority	All urgent cases	Urgent cases on list for more than one month as a percentage of all urgent cases
Warrington	10	100·0
Harrow	7	100·0
Solihull	3	100·0
North Bedfordshire	2	100·0
West Surrey and North East Hants	1,474	94·0
Riverside	594	89·7
Lancaster	143	89·5
Northampton	667	88·2
West Lambeth	687	88·4
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	241	88·0
Tunbridge Wells	388	86·9
Wolverhampton	111	86·5
Sunderland	158	85·4
Tower Hamlets	1,416	84·3
Plymouth	214	83·6
North Manchester	142	83·1
Newham	59	83·1
South West Hertfordshire	138	82·6
Leeds Eastern	601	82·5
East Berkshire	505	82·4
Stockport	427	81·3
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	137	80·3
South Birmingham	727	80·2
Kettering	5	80·0
Basildon and Thurrock	663	79·5
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	253	77·9
North Birmingham	144	77·8
Newcastle	1,210	77·3
Norwich	1,266	75·9
North Staffordshire	840	75·6
Doncaster	351	75·2
Chichester	159	74·2
West Essex	77	74·0
Southampton and South West Hants	1,137	73·6
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	586	72·2
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	255	71·8
Sheffield	1,278	71·5
Huddersfield	7	71·4
Bristol and Weston	379	71·2
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	250	71·2
Cambridge	619	70·6
Northumberland	163	70·6
Pontefract	319	70·5
Brighton	449	70·2
Lewisham and North Southwark	756	70·0
Central Birmingham	665	69·5
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	220	69·1
City and Hackney	2,154	68·7
Leeds Western	711	67·8
Hillingdon	750	67·6
Shropshire	428	67·3
Oldham	284	67·3
Milton Keynes	73	67·1
Liverpool	522	67·0
East Dorset	891	66·7
North West Surrey	90	66·7
Paddington and North Kensington	75	66·7
South Warwickshire	188	66·5
Nottingham	152	66·4
Ealing	369	65·9
Islington	145	65·5
East Birmingham	452	65·3
West Dorset	197	65·0
Salisbury	273	64·8
Hounslow and Spelthorne	517	63·6
Hastings	129	63·6
North Lincolnshire	185	63·2
West Birmingham	136	62·5
North Derbyshire	193	62·2
East Suffolk	107	61·7
Worthing	279	61·6
Grimsby	13	61·5
Darlington	10	60·0
Coventry	701	59·9
South Tees	193	59·1
Kingston and Esher	227	58·1
Southend	523	57·6
Tameside and Glossop	124	57·3
Salford	208	57·2
West Norfolk and Wisbech	156	57·1
Airedale	107	55·1
Gloucester	421	54·9
Bath	493	54·8
West Suffolk	41	53·7

District health authority	All urgent cases	Urgent cases on list for more than one month as a percentage of all urgent cases
Wandsworth	484	53·5
North Warwickshire	15	53·3
North East Essex	374	52·7
Bassetlaw	38	52·6
South Lincolnshire	75	52·0
Gateshead	54	51·9
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	345	51·0
Croydon	116	50·9
Somerset	624	50·0
Redbridge	50	50·0
Harrogate	28	50·0
Hampstead	20	50·0
Aylesbury Vale	54	48·1
Rochdale	105	47·6
Dudley	153	46·4
Winchester	40	45·0
Camberwell	108	44·4
South Manchester	797	44·4
Rotherham	59	44·1
Haringey	62	43·5
Waltham Forest	144	43·1
Maidstone	140	42·9
Bloomsbury	342	42·7
Central Manchester	170	42·4
Canterbury and Thanet	304	41·8
Bradford	243	41·2
Barnet	199	40·7
Southern Derbyshire	162	40·1
Dartford and Gravesham	46	39·1
Huntingdon	26	38·5
Wigan	34	38·2
Frenchay	113	38·1
Southmead	64	37·5
Swindon	40	37·5
Crewe	343	37·3
Mid Essex	27	37·0
St. Helens and Knowsley	11	36·4
Mid Downs	91	36·3
Merton and Sutton	283	35·3
Preston	74	35·1
East Hertfordshire	20	35·0
West Cumbria	29	34·5
Medway	141	34·0
Mid Surrey	89	33·7
Torbay	27	33·3
South East Kent	12	33·3
West Berkshire	88	33·0
Leicestershire	695	31·8
Peterborough	26	30·8
Mid Staffordshire	99	29·3
East Surrey	87	28·7
South West Surrey	77	28·6
Herefordshire	51	27·5
Exeter	160	26·9
Hartlepool	54	25·9
Eastbourne	12	25·0
Brent	21	23·8
Oxfordshire	189	23·3
Enfield	13	23·1
Dewsbury	5	20·0
Macclesfield	162	17·9
South Sefton	123	17·9
South East Staffordshire	17	17·6
Wakefield	73	16·4
Trafford	26	15·4
Chester	60	15·0
Calderdale	7	14·3
Barnsley	55	12·7
Central Nottinghamshire	37	10·8
Scarborough	29	10·3
Wirral	197	9·6
Durham	12	8·3
Bolton	32	6·3
Worcester and District	42	2·4
North Tyneside	58	0·0
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	27	0·0
Kidderminster and District	19	0·0
Scunthorpe	14	0·0
Walsall	14	0·0
South Cumbria	10	0·0
Wycombe	10	0·0
Isle of Wight	9	0·0
West Lancashire	7	0·0
Bromley	6	0·0
Cheltenham	4	0·0
North Devon	4	0·0
North West Hertfordshire	4	0·0
York	3	0·0
Chorley and South Ribble	1	0·0

The following district health authorities had no urgent cases on the waiting list at 30 September 1985:

Bexley	North Tees
Bromsgrove and Redditch	North West Durham
Bury	Northallerton
East Cumbria	Rugby
East Yorkshire	Sandwell
Greenwich	South Bedfordshire
Halton	South Tyneside
Hull	South West Durham
North Hertfordshire	Southport and Formby

District Health Authorities listed in order of the percentage of non-urgent cases waiting over a year at 30 September 1985.

District health authority	Total all cases	Non-urgent cases on list for more than one year as a percentage of all cases
Frenchay	4,483	58·0
Warrington	2,771	48·2
South Birmingham	7,408	47·0
East Birmingham	3,741	45·4
Basildon and Thurrock	5,195	44·8
Oldham	4,530	44·2
Hillingdon	7,243	44·1
Crewe	5,248	43·1
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	4,005	42·5
Aylesbury Vale	4,024	42·2
Cambridge	5,397	42·0
Rochdale	2,651	41·7
Central Nottinghamshire	5,532	41·3
Coventry	6,501	39·1
Hartlepool	1,754	38·5
Ealing	1,932	38·4
Scunthorpe	2,962	36·7
Tower Hamlets	6,324	36·7
North Staffordshire	10,635	36·5
West Lambeth	5,471	36·0
Kingston and Esher	2,954	36·0
Sheffield	11,307	35·8
Darlington	1,360	35·5
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	4,684	34·9
South Lincolnshire	3,982	34·8
Nottingham	8,844	34·2
Preston	4,238	34·2
Norwich	7,926	33·9
Tunbridge Wells	4,859	33·4
North Derbyshire	3,075	33·3
Salisbury	4,261	33·2

District health authority	Total all cases	Non-urgent cases on list for more than one year as a percentage of all cases
Southampton and South West Hampshire	8,169	32·9
Northampton	5,152	32·1
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	3,013	32·1
Rotherham	3,936	31·5
East Berkshire	7,126	31·1
South West Hertfordshire	1,862	31·1
Dudley	4,709	30·9
Airedale	2,373	30·4
Solihull	2,067	30·4
Hull	6,200	30·2
Kettering	2,694	29·8
Hampstead	2,321	29·5
Cheltenham	2,216	29·4
Somerset	4,846	29·3
Mid Surrey	2,472	28·6
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	2,676	28·4
Gloucester	4,344	28·4
Stockport	4,297	27·9
South Tees	7,081	27·9
South Warwickshire	3,313	27·4
Plymouth	5,126	27·0
Bath	5,346	26·9
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	3,228	26·7
Herefordshire	2,496	26·7
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,991	26·6
Rugby	432	26·4
Leeds Eastern	5,681	26·1
Wigan	4,349	25·7
South Sefton	3,850	25·7
Winchester	2,372	25·3
Southmead	2,617	25·0
Chichester	2,402	25·0
Walsall	2,736	24·8
Bolton	2,607	24·4
Doncaster	5,048	24·2
Lancaster	1,963	24·1
Southern Derbyshire	6,601	24·1
South West Surrey	2,897	24·0
Enfield	3,005	23·9
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,353	23·8
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	6,280	23·8
Tameside and Glossop	2,084	23·8
Pontefract	1,999	23·4
Shropshire	7,484	23·4
Dartford and Gravesham	4,170	23·2
Bromley	1,932	23·0
Chorley and South Ribble	994	22·8
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	1,994	22·6
Salford	4,281	22·4
Dewsbury	803	22·3
Central Birmingham	5,783	22·2
Worthing	2,992	22·1
Mid Staffordshire	2,173	22·1
North Warwickshire	1,765	21·9
Wolverhampton	3,931	21·3
North Bedfordshire	2,212	21·3
Bassetlaw	771	21·1
North Hertfordshire	2,509	21·1
West Essex	4,717	21·0
Southport and Formby	1,071	20·9
Bloomsbury	12,702	20·7
Canterbury and Thanet	3,837	20·6
West Suffolk	2,264	20·5
Hounslow and Spelthorne	4,612	20·4
Waltham Forest	4,132	20·3
Huddersfield	2,940	20·1
Brent	1,772	19·9
East Suffolk	2,890	19·8
West Birmingham	3,534	19·7
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	6,080	19·5
West Surrey and North East Hants	4,514	19·5
City and Hackney	6,439	19·4
Islington	1,830	19·3
Lewisham and North Southwark	7,162	19·3
West Dorset	2,411	19·2
Southend	2,883	19·2
Maidstone	2,161	18·8
Eastbourne	2,630	18·5
South East Staffordshire	2,337	18·4
East Yorkshire	1,205	18·2
Brighton	4,222	18·0
Bristol and Weston	7,520	17·9
South Manchester	6,547	17·7
Bradford	5,956	17·7
East Cumbria	2,863	17·6
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	3,877	17·5
South West Durham	638	17·1
Exeter	4,638	16·8
Barnet	3,549	16·7
Wandsworth	2,646	16·4
North Lincolnshire	3,432	16·2
North West Durham	643	16·0
Newcastle	8,645	15·8
Swindon	3,306	15·8
Milton Keynes	2,316	15·8
North Devon	1,178	15·5
Torbay	1,987	15·4
Central Manchester	4,902	15·2
East Dorset	5,328	14·9
West Berkshire	4,532	14·9
North Birmingham	2,216	14·8
Worcester and District	3,199	14·8
Hastings	2,285	14·7
Leeds Western	4,587	14·7
Barnsley	2,080	14·4
Northumberland	1,848	14·4
South Cumbria	1,292	14·3
Mid Downs	2,396	13·7
Greenwich	1,972	13·6
West Lancashire	1,773	13·5
South Tyneside	690	13·5
Sandwell	1,274	13·3
North West Surrey	3,101	13·1
Sunderland	3,937	13·1
Riverside	5,333	12·8
Wirral	3,059	12·7
York	2,776	12·6
Bexley	1,659	12·4
Liverpool	7,921	12·1
Mid Essex	3,382	12·0
Peterborough	3,494	12·0
North East Essex	3,754	12·0
Leicestershire	7,582	11·8
West Cumbria	1,186	11·7
Macclesfield	1,152	11·7
East Surrey	1,400	11·7
South East Kent	2,791	11·6
Oxfordshire	6,268	11·5
Camberwell	2,749	11·2
North Manchester	2,490	11·1
Newham	999	10·7
South Bedfordshire	2,156	10·5
Chester	1,573	10·4
Croydon	2,368	10·3
Scarborough	1,687	10·3
Wakefield	2,074	10·0

District health authority	Total all cases	Non-urgent cases on list for more than one year as a percentage of all cases
Harrow	1,105	9·9
Kidderminster and District	1,249	9·5
North Tees	995	9·4
Grimsby	1,204	9·2
Medway	2,187	9·2
Gateshead	1,036	9·2
Calderdale	1,231	8·9
Redbridge	1,388	8·1
West Norfolk and Wisbech	1,627	7·7
Durham	880	7·7
North West Hertfordshire	1,930	7·5
Harrogate	1,579	7·4
Haringey	1,055	6·9
Isle of Wight	1,502	6·9
Wycombe	1,197	6·8
Trafford	1,231	6·3
Merton and Sutton	2,605	6·3
Paddington and North Kensington	2,765	6·1
East Hertfordshire	1,285	5·8
North Tyneside	1,306	5·1
Bury	981	5·1
Northallerton	506	3·8
Huntingdon	777	1·2
Halton	143	0·0

Geriatric Care

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many beds were available for geriatric care in the *(a)* public and *(b)* private sector in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) how many geriatric patients were treated in *(a)* public and *(b)* private sector hospitals in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 23 October 1986, c. *984*]: The available information is given in the table.

Geriatric sector — *England*

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Available beds						
NHS hospitals specialty of Geriatric medicine						
Number of beds	54,947	55,550	55,646	55,801	55,571	55,320
Geriatric beds as a percentage of all available beds in NHS hospitals	15·4	15·8	16·0	16·3	16·6	17·0
Independent sector hospitals and nursing homes, number of beds for elderly patients	n/a	n/a	18,197	22,554	[1]27,346	[1]33,869
Activity						
NHS hospitals specialty of Geriatric medicine						
In-patient cases treated	264,006	279,954	297,200	324,634	349,773	382,181
Day cases treated	651	764	494	371	507	678
Total out-patient attendances	254,819	270,115	279,731	302,072	322,004	336,537
Regular geriatric day patient attendances	1,474,428	1,504,251	1,504,323	1,606,404	1,614,842	1,602,576
NHS patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with non-NHS institutions[2]						
In-patient cases treated	1,235	1,357	1,253	937	1,086	[1]999
Total out-patient attendances	5,900	4,257	3,772	4,630	2,992	[1]2,853

[1] Provisional.
[2] No information is available centrally on non-NHS patients treated in private sector hospitals.
n/a Not available.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the table showing total growth on the National Health Service expenditure given in his answer of 14 May 1985, Official Report, columns *119-20*, so as to provide information for 1985-86.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 November 1986, c. *363-64*]: The information is set out in the following table. Since the reply to the hon. Member last year there have been a number of technical changes to the figuring to reflect a revised Vote structure and a change in accounting for hospital and community health services expenditure. Health authority income from sales of surplus land and property is now included in the definition of gross National Health Service expenditure. I have therefore provided figures on a comparable basis from 1978-79 onwards. Fully comparable figures from earlier years are not available.

These figures take no account of cash released through health authorities' cost improvement programmes which make a major contribution to increasing patient care.

NHS spending is planned to increase by 3·6 per cent. in real terms in 1986-87.

Expenditure on the National Health Service in England

	England gross expenditure (£ million cash)	*Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)*	*Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index*	*Percentage increase deflated by movements in NHS pay and prices*
1978-79	6,426			
1979-80	7,640	+1·7	−0·7	−0·6
1980-81	9,970	+10·0	+15·9	+2·7
1981-82	11,182	+2·1	+1·6	+2·9
1982-83	12,196	+1·7	+4·2	+1·6
1983-84	12,920	+1·4	+0·7	+0·9
1984-85	13,874	+3·0	+1·2	+1·4
1985-86	14,660	−0·3	+1·4	+0·2

Abortions and Sterilisations

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the average percentage of the workload of gynaecological departments which is spent in National Health Service hospitals upon non-emergency gynaecological out-patient attendances for *(a)* the performing of abortions and *(b)* the performing of sterilisations; and what percentage of such non-emergency gynaecological out-patient work is spent dealing with sequeliae of such procedures.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 3 November 1986, c. *367*]: I regret that I cannot give my hon. Friend information in precisely the form he seeks. Information on day cases (where the patient attends for investigation, treatment or operation and occupies a bed under clinical supervision on a planned non-residential basis) is shown in the following table.

Day case activity NHS non-psychiatric hospitals, 1984—England

	Number
Estimated number of day cases treated with main diagnosis of:	
Legally induced abortion	21,801
Female sterilisation	5,180
Total number of day cases treated in Gynaecology departments	95,586

Health Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the revenue expenditure on health and community health services for each year from 1974-75 giving information adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator, *(b)* National Health Service pay and prices and *(c)* the retail price index for (i) England and (ii) Wales.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *402*]: The available information relating to England is shown in the table. The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Hospital and community health services gross revenue expenditure (England)

Year	*Cash*[1] *£ million*	*1985-86 price £ million*		
		Based on gross domestic product deflator	*Based on HCHS pay and prices*	*Based on retail price index*
1974-75	2,353	7,958	8,534	7,821
1975-76	3,082	8,295	8,679	8,213
1976-77	3,518	8,365	8,707	8,135
1977-78	3,936	8,217	8,970	7,982
1978-79	4,406	8,311	9,160	8,253
1979-80	5,279	8,521	9,106	8,537
1980-81	6,963	9,474	9,386	9,681
1981-82	7,681	9,513	9,571	9,578
1982-83	8,244	9,522	9,645	9,602
1983-84	8,667	9,580	9,646	9,642
1984-85	9,161	9,711	9,637	9,703
1985-86	9,678	9,678	9,678	9,678
1986-87	10,423	10,046	n/a	n/a

[1] Figures for the years 1974-75 to 1977-78 are accruals (income and expenditure) based; figures for the years 1978-79 to 1986-87 are shown on a cash flow basis. The accruals-based expenditure in 1978-79 was £4,421 million.
n/a = Not yet available.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 7 November 1986

NORTHERN IRELAND

Strip Searches

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received about strip-searching in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: About 40 letters, some from organisations and some from individuals, have been received during the last six months, mostly about the searching of women prisoners. In addition, a report was published by the National Council for Civil Liberties in July, and we have also received a report from the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights.

Strip-searching is a normal feature of prison security arrangements throughout the United Kingdom, and to the best of our knowledge, in other western European countries and North America. I am satisfied that the level of searches in Northern Ireland is the minimum consistent with requirements of security and safety.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Self-Employment

Mr. David Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will now review current tax arrangements for encouraging self-employment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the current Inland Revenue rulings determining the status of a taxpayer as between being employed or self-employed; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he will publish a list of the basic rules and procedures by which the Inland Revenue determines the status of taxpayers, for both tax and national insurance purposes; what plans he has for amending and relaxing these rules, in the light of Her Majesty's Government's policy of promoting self-employment; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what plans his Department has for promoting self-employment through changes in taxation policy and tax administration.

Mr. Lawson: Since this Government came to office, the number of self-employed people has risen by more than 800,000; an increase of almost half. This reflects the success of the Government's measures over the whole range of policy and administration.

Whether an individual is self-employed is a question of fact and of general law. Essentially the question is whether someone is in business on their own account. In the vast majority of cases, the rules provide a straightforward answer.

We have taken a number of steps to provide, in plain words, clear guidance on the rules, to ensure greater consistency of approach between Government Departments, and to reduce the administrative burden on individuals. Copies of pamphlet IR 56 which the Inland Revenue published last year to help any taxpayers who are in doubt whether they are employed or self-employed have already been placed in the Library.

Our consistent objective has been to encourage genuine self-employment and to help people to set up their own businesses.

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new economic and financial obligations it is envisaged that Her Majesty's Government would have to undertake in the event of the United Kingdom joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There would be an obligation to maintain the value of sterling within the agreed margins.

EC (Interest Payments)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the EEC Commission is not required to pay interest on delayed payments to EEC member states.

Mr. Brooke: The Council has always so far taken the view that it would not be fruitful for the Commission to pay interest to member states in such cases since member states themselves would have to finance the interest payments just like other Community budget expenditure.

Petrol

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to adjust taxation on petrol so that lead-free petrol retails at a lower price than leaded petrol.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before Prorogation. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the estimated tax revenue since 1982 from the taxation of unemployment benefit, both in total and for each year since 1982.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before Prorogation. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the European Court of Justice to consider and determine the case being promoted by the European Economic Community Commission for a declaration that the zero rating of sewerage, water, gas, electricity, new houses and protective clothing and footwear should be discontinued for purposes of levying value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The written part of the proceedings has now been completed: the United Kingdom's rejoinder was lodged with the court on 2 October 1986; but a date for

the oral hearing has not yet been set. It is unlikely to be before March 1987. Judgment is normally given about two months after the oral hearing.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of additional revenue per annum which would accrue to the Treasury if the United Kingdom abolishes zero rating for certain goods and services as proposed in the infraction proceedings initiated by the European Economic Community Commission in the Court of Justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government do not accept the Commission's contention that the sixth VAT directive requires the imposition of VAT on the goods and services covered by the infraction proceedings. If they did, however, the revenue yield would depend on the rate imposed.

Cigarettes (Taxation)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his Department has made a study of the correlation between changes in the total taxation in cigarettes and changes in the volume of sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: It is estimated that for a 1 per cent. increase in the total tax on cigarettes the price of cigarettes rises by about three-quarters of a percent and the volume of sales is about one-third of a percent lower than it would otherwise have been.

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchquer what proportion of the retail price of cigarettes is taken up by the tax, including duty, on tobacco.

Mr. Brooke: Duty and value added tax together currently account for three quarters of the retail price of a typical packet of 20 cigarettes.

Form T5 (EC)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what approaches he has made to the customs directorate of the European Community Commission concerning the control copy T5 form; and what response has been received.

Mr. Brooke: The United Kingdom customs delegation to the appropriate committee of the Customs Union Service of the EC Commission secured agreement, at the most recent meeting of that committee, on 23 September, that the question of control copies of T5 forms should be further examined with a view to improving the system. The United Kingdom has pressed for Commission staff to prepare proposals to be put before the committee at an early future meeting.

Lloyd's Underwriting Profit

Mr. Evenett asked the Chancellor of the Exchquer what representations he has received concerning the assessment of Lloyd's underwriting profit for tax and national insurance purposes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provid an answer before Prorogation. I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Business Turnover (VAT)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchquer if he will set out, for each of the financial years from 1980 onwards, how many businesses registered for value added tax purposes had an annual turnover of less than £100,000; and in each year what proportion of the total businesses registered for value added tax those numbers represented.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before Prorogation. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Privatisation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost of pre-flotation publicity for each of the concerns privatised by the Government since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 October 1986, c. *232*]: The Government's pre-sale publicity costs on share sales since 1979 were, excluding VAT:

	£'000
British Aerospace (1981)	545
Cable and Wireless (1981)	303
Amersham International (1982)	99
Britoil (1982)	304
Associated British Ports (1983)	260
Cable and Wireless (1983)	806
Associated British Ports (1984)	125
Enterprise Oil (1984)	213
British Telecom (1984)	12,383
British Aerospace (1985)	1,656
Britoil (1985)	3,528
Cable and Wireless (1985)	2,422

Taxpayers (Statistics)

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people had incomes below the level which makes them liable to the standard rate of income tax in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 November 1986]: The information is as follows:

(million)

Year	*Tax units*[1] *Not liable to tax*	*Liable at Reduced Rates*[2] *only*	*Total not liable at Standard/ Basic Rate*
1956-57	[3]8·9	12·7	21·6
1960-61	[3]7·3	14·2	21·5
1970-71	8·2	—	8·2
1975-76	7·6	—	7·6
1980-81	8·8	—	8·8
1986-87[4]	10·7	—	10·7

[1] Married couples and single persons over school leaving age but not at school.

[2] Reduced rates were charged as follows:

£	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
1956-57		
60 at	11·25	(8·75)
150 at	23·75	(18·47)
150 at	33·75	(26·25)

£	per cent.	per cent.
1960-61		
60 at	8·75	(6·81)
150 at	21·25	(16·53)
150 at	31·25	(24·31)

Rates in brackets are the effective tax rates after allowing for earned income relief at $\frac{1}{4}$.

[3] Excluding those with incomes below £50 per annum.

[4] Provisional.

Public Expenditure

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the proportion of public expenditure taken up by rent rebates, rate rebates, and housing benefit, in 1956, 1960, 1970, 1975, 1980, and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 November 1986]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before Prorogation. I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) Act 1981

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the Lord Advocate's guidelines to chief constables on the workings of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As the guidelines are lengthy, I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make available to interested parties the guidelines to chief constables on the workings of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) Act 1981.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Courtesy copies of the guidelines will be made available to interested parties on request.

WALES

GCSE (Cash Support)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent represetations he has received on the introduction of the General Certificate of Secondary Education syllabus in Welsh schools; if he plans to increase cash support for the examination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Since the start of the present school term representation about resources for the introduction of the GCSE have been received from three local education authorities, three parent teacher associations, one school governing body, one teacher and two parents. Considerable resources have been made available to local education authorities; special funding for books and equipment during 1986-87 of £300,000 from MSG and more than £900,000 through the education support grant mechanism, and £1·2 million over the two years 1987-88 and 1988-89. The Government consider that these resources are sufficient to ensure the smooth introduction of the GCSE bearing in mind that they are intended to be additional to adequate local authority provision through secondary school capitation allowances.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Wet, Salted Cod

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the adoption of an amendment to the current European Community tariff quota on wet, salted cod.

Mr. Alan Clark: As requested by the House of Commons Select committee on European Legislation, I wish to explain the agreement by the Government to the amendment to the operative date of the current tariff quota for wet, salted cod before it was possible for the Select committee to scrutinise it. There is no impact on the United Kingdom's interests. In order to meet the compelling economic needs of Portugal, agreement in principle was reached at the Fisheries Council on 22 September that the quota, which came into force on 2 July 1986, should be retroactive to 1 March 1986. The Government agreed to this exceptional measure, after satisfying itself that the use of retroactive application in this case met the conditions of the EC Council resolution of 27 June 1974 concerning measures to simplify customs administrations and although it had not been scrutinised by Parliament. I regret that the normal parliamentary procedures were not followed on this occasion but, in the circumstances, I hope the House will understand why the Government acted in this way.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Internal Market Council meeting held on 3 November.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Council, which I chaired, agreed three items in the presidency action programme on completing the internal market. These were directives on standards for direct broadcasting by satellite (which was adopted) and on the co-ordination of the laws of member states relating to self-employed commercial agents; and a resolution on the introduction of appropriate signboards at the communities external frontiers and internal borders. The Council also made progress on a number of other items in the internal market programme; on good laboratory practice for chemical products; on marketing and testing of pharmaceutical products; on Community trade marks; on the gradual abolition of controls and formalities applicable to Community nationals when crossing intra-Community borders; on a right of residence for EC nationals in the territory of other Member States and on roll-over protection structures for tractors.

Patent Life

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the average effective patent life of pharmaceutical products.

Mr. Pattie: The term of the patent is 20 years from the date of filing. Patents filed before June 1978 are subject,

during the last four years of that term, to licences of right. The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry has supplied statistics showing that, for products first marketed in recent years, the average time that had elapsed from filing of the corresponding patent was as follows:

	Years
1981	9·1
1982	11·6
1983	10·6
1984	11·7
1985	11·8

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what steps are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to encourage inventors by increasing the patent life of products;

(2) whether the Government proposes to legislate on the basis of paragraph 6.11 of chapter VI of Cmnd. 9712;

(3) when the Government propose to introduce legislation on the basis of Cmnd. 9712 on intellectual property and innovation.

Mr. Pattie: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing the trade deficits and surpluses in manufactures with the European Economic Community and the rest of the world, respectively, as set out in his reply of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *466*, but on an overseas trade statitics basis.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *933*, to the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) if the search of the Ministry of Defence records revealed any involvement by Dr. Kurt Waldheim in the fate of service men taken prisoner by German Army Group E during world war two.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my answer of 23 October to the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson).

US Nuclear Submarine (Accident)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister what information Her Majesty's Government have received recently in relation to an accident with a United States nuclear submarine in the Irish sea; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 9 May 1986 at column 270.

Wright Memoirs

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister (1) what discussions she or her Office had with the Australian Prime Minister Mr. Bob Hawke on matters relating to legal action in Australia on the Wright memoirs;

(2) whether she has discussed the proceedings or matters relating to the proceedings in the Wright memoirs case in the Australian courts with members of the Australian Government or Members of the Australian Parliament; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what advice she has given the Australian Government as to the way the Australian Government may wish to participate in the proceedings before the Supreme Court in New South Wales in the case of Her Majesty's Government's action against Heinemann Australia PTY Ltd. and Mr. Peter Wright for an order restraining the publication of Mr. Peter Wright's manuscripts.

The Prime Minister: Any such discussions, if they have occurred, would be confidential.

Mr. M. Vanunu

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether she has had any discussions with *(a)* Mr. Shimon Peres and *(b)* any other member of the Israeli Government regarding Mr. Vanunu prior to Mr. Vanunu's departure from the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether any member or official of the Israeli Government communicated to the Prime Minister or her office their intention to seek to procure the return of Mr. Vanunu from the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: No.

SCOTLAND

Main Report

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total cost to the taxpayer of compiling the Main report on teachers' pay and conditions of service in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The cost of the inquiry up to the date of publication of the report, but excluding the cost of publication, was some £67,000. No remuneration was paid to any member of the committee.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been paid out in travel grants to each school in Tayside region participating in the assisted places scheme in each year since the scheme was implemented.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

School	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Glenalmond College	—	33	53	108	n/a
High School of Dundee	1,304	4,110	4,038	6,578	[1]9,330
Kilgraston, (Convent of the Sacred Heart)	—	15	2,038	2,544	3,882
Morrison's Academy	1,458	3,578	2,769	5,152	[1]11,528
Rannoch School	200	88	110	1,241	[1]2,292
Strathallan School	—	225	103	461	783

[1] Provisional figures.
n/a Not yet available.

Planning Education

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of planning education in Scotland; and what representations he has received from the Royal Town Planning Institute on entry into the profession.

Mr. John MacKay: The report of the transbinary review of town and country planning education in the United Kingdom was completed in March this year.

Following representations from interested parties, including the Scottish branch of the Royal Town Planning Institute, it has been decided that planning courses will continue to be provided at higher education institutions in Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Royal Town Planning Institute advocated the retention of three Scottish centres for planning education, resourced on the basis of the report's recommendations, with some additional funding for postgraduate students. No final decision has yet been taken on the latter question.

Dunfermline College

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional accommodation costs at Dunfermline college site will be incurred to meet the proposed transfer of students from Jordanhill college of education.

Mr. John MacKay: I do not expect any additional accommodation costs incurred as a direct result of the transfer of students from Jordanhill college of education to be of more than a minor nature.

Bus Services

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many services registered under the Transport Act 1985 and which were due to come into operation on 26 or 27 October did not in fact operate.

Mr. Ancram: This information is not available. However the Traffic Commissioner has powers under the Transport Act 1985, where a case is brought to his attention, to penalise any operator who fails to operate a service that has been registered.

Young People (Accommodation)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from the Edinburgh council for the Single Homeless about accommodation for young people in the public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have received letters dated 28 October from the Edinburgh Council for the Single Homeless, making a number of points about youth homelessness. We are still considering these representations; when my reply issues, I will send a copy to the hon. Member.

Centre for Continuing Education (Dundee University)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Sectretary of State for Scotland if he will now instruct the Scottish Education Department to increase its annual grant to the centre for continuing education at Dundee university to a level comparable with the 1985 funding of at least £11,500.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Police Training (Video)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will include the video "Getting over the Fear" in the training programme for police officers at Tulliallan police college.

Mr. Lang: The relevance of this video to police training is currently being assessed by the college.

Tulliallan Police College

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hours the course at Tulliallan police college lasts for *(a)* new recruits, *(b)* refresher courses for officers up to the rank of sergeant and *(c)* refresher courses for officers; and how many hours on each course are specifically allocated to the workings of and the implementation of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Violence) Act 1981.

Mr. Lang: The training programme at the Scottish police college is based on the recommendations of a working party of the Police Advisory Board for Scotland which reported in 1983. The programme is kept under regular review and adjustments are made as necessary to meet changing demands. Courses are provided for:—

Probationer constables (Basic and Advanced courses—both eight weeks)
Sergeants (two weeks)
Selected Sergeants (eight weeks)
Newly Promoted Inspectors (five weeks)
Superintendents (six weeks)
Detective Training
Traffic Training

At present probationer constables receive two periods devoted to the Matrimonial Homes (Family Violence) Act 1981 and domestic violence generally. The selected sergeants' course has three periods on violence against women and two periods on the role of the female and child unit which is operated by Strathclyde police. The newly promoted inspectors' course has two periods on the 1981 Act, and the detective courses have three periods on crime

against women. In all cases, each period lasts for 50 minutes. In addition, the safety of women features in other aspects of the training.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Wright Memoirs

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to the answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column 301, what advice he has given to the Australian Government as to in what way the Australian Government may wish to participate in the proceedings before the Supreme Court in New South Wales in the case of the action against Heinemann Australia PTY Ltd. and Mr. Peter Wright for an order restraining the publication of Mr. Wright's manuscripts.

The Attorney-General: Discussions on these matters between Her Majesty's Government and the Australian Government are confidential.

Simon Wiesenthal Institute (Murder Allegations)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General if he will refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions the allegations of murder contained in the submission to Her Majesty's Government by the Simon Wiesenthal Institute concerning 12 persons currently residing in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have not yet had an opportunity fully to consider the submission referred to by the hon. Member and will therefore write to him.

Supreme Court and County Court Rules

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General when the Lord Chancellor proposes to publish the results of his review of Order 113 of the Rules of the Supreme Court and Order 24 of the County Court Rules; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor is considering the responses to his paper on the summary procedure for the possession of land and the Rule Committee will then decide what changes, if any, to make to the rules in the light of those responses. It is possible that such changes will be concluded in a statutory instrument in December.

"Conspiracy of Silence"

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General if he is taking any steps to seek to ban the distribution of the book "Conspiracy of Silence".

The Attorney-General: No.

MI5 (Information)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General whether he proposes to take any steps against Sir Dick White, Mr. Arthur Martin or Mr. George Russel Leigh in respect of information on MI5 which they have given to publishers.

The Attorney-General: This matter is under consideration.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Inspection

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria he used in fixing the level of the charges which have been introduced for milk plant inspections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The object of charging for milk and dairies work is to cover all the costs which the Ministry incurs in administering the milk and dairies regulations. These costs — which comprise not only wages and salaries but travel expenditure, office and laboratory services, accommodation and other overheads — currently total approximately £2·2 million a year. Following informal discussion with the NFU, FUW and MMB we have concluded that the most equitable way to collect this sum from producers is to charge on the basis of two flat rates, one for routine visits to farms by dairy husbandry officers to check compliance with the regulations and another for visits to farms to sample and later test raw milk sold by holders of an untreated milk producer's licence and private water supplies used for dairying purposes. In the course of discussion with the industry my officials have indicated that these rates are likely to be in the region of £90 a visit and £22 a visit respectively. Dairy husbandry officers visit wholesale producers once every two years on average, so £90 a visit is equivalent to £45 a year. Wholesale producers with high standards of compliance with the regulations are visited once every three years or even less frequently, and for them the proposed charge is equivalent to £30 a year or less. I recognise that holders of an untreated milk producer's licence, including farmhouse caterers, are visited more frequently and that there is concern about the effect of charging upon this sector. I am therefore considering this aspect of charging. I shall then issue formal proposals as a basis for consultation with interested parties in accordance with Section 118(6) of the Food Act 1984, and regulations will then be made and laid before the House in the usual way.

Lamb Exports

Mr. Sims asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the conditions in which a lorry load of 500 live sheep were transported from Dover to Spain on or about Friday 10 October; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A journey on 10-11 October was reported in *The Observer* newspaper on 19 October and further details have been supplied to my Department by the RSPCA. The sheep were transported in French lorries from Calais to Spain. We have contacted the French and Spanish authorities to discuss these reports and ask for their future co-operation. We are investigating whether breaches of United Kingdom law have occurred and have told exporters of sheep to France that they must provide more extensive information, including documentary proof of final destination from the French importer, before further export licences are issued.

Dinoseb

Miss Maynard asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by whom the chemical Dinoseb was cleared for use in the United Kingdom; what account he

proposes to take of the action taken by the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States of America in relation to the chemical; what estimate he has of the size of the workforce of both sexes exposed to this chemical in the United Kingdom; if products containing Dinoseb are available over the counter for use by amateur gardeners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The herbicide dinoseb has been evaluated on a number of occasions since 1961 by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and its scientific sub-committee. On the basis of their advice, successive Governments have agreed to allow its use, subject to certain conditions, under the pesticides safety precaution scheme and more recently under the new statutory arrangements for pesticides approvals. Under these, Dinoseb has provisional approval. This was agreed jointly by my Department, the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office, and the Departments of Employment, Health and Social Services and the Environment.

Companies supplying Dinoseb products in the United Kingdom have been requested to provide us with the data on which the EPA based its decision. As soon as we have those data, they will be evaluated and reviewed as a matter of urgency by the independent experts of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and its scientific sub-committee.

No data on exposure to workers using Dinoseb in the United Kingdom are available in the form requested. However, Dinoseb is not widely used in the United Kingdom and, under the terms of its approval, does not leave residues in crops at harvest. Moreover it is subject to the poisonous substances in agriculture regulations as a second schedule part II substance which require operators to wear, according to operation, faceshield, rubber gloves, coverall, rubber boots and hood.

The risk of exposure is therefore low.

No products containing Dinoseb have been cleared or approved in the United Kingdom for use by amateur growers.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the volume or tonnage of cereals which is estimated to have been lost or stolen from intervention stocks in the United Kingdom during the last seven years.

Mr. Gummer: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that there is adequate supervision and effective management of intervention arrangements as far as food surpluses held in the United Kingdom are concerned;

(2) if he is satisfied that the management of stocks of cereal surpluses in intervention stores is and has been of adequate competence; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what checks are carried out, prior to the approval of companies and premises for storage of intervention stocks of cereals, as to the quality of their staff's equipment and experience; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is his estimate of the size of the stock of cereal held in intervention within the United Kingdom; and on how many sites these stocks are held;

(5) how many prosecutions have been initiated in regard to the adulteration of cereal stocks in intervention stores during the last seven years; and if any further prosecutions are currently envisaged;

(6) if he will investigate reports that silica sand had been added to cereal stocks held in intervention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister of Agricultue, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions companies involved in holding intervention stocks of agricultural produce have been found to be in financial difficulties; how many have gone into liquidation or are threatened with it; and if he will name the companies involved and state in each case the action taken by officials to safeguard public money and the amount of public money that has been or is likely to be lost as a result of the liquidations that have taken, or are likely to take, place.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *419*]: Details of the companies which went into liquidation are given below. Other information held by the Intervention Board on companies' financial affairs is commercially confidential.

Company	*Exchequer loss* £	*Action*
Bedford Transport Limited	239,770·20	Beef stocks were sold at a reduced price to minimise loss after mould growth had developed.
Industrial Storage and Forwarding Limited	4,523·70	The stock of skimmed milk powder was taken over by another company. The loss represented handling charges.
F C International Limited	12,233·70	The stock of skimmed milk powder was moved to another store and the sum shown arose principally from the transport costs incurred.

Fisheries Limits

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the area in square kilometres of water bounded by the United Kingdom fishing limits; how many *(a)* vessels and *(b)* aircraft are available to police those waters; what estimate he has of the average number of fishing vessels active in United Kingdom waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The total sea area within British fishing limits is 581,584 sq km. It is not possible to give a precise estimate of the average number of fishing vessels active in

United Kingdom waters but our approximate estimate is between 300 and 500 vessels at any given time, depending on seasonal patterns of fishing and the weather. The Royal Navy fishery protection squadron comprises 13 ships, which are deployed with the aim of securing continuous coverage throughout the year equivalent to 4·7 ships on station. In addition, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland operate four offshore and three inshore patrol vessels to the west of Scotland. At the present time four aircraft are available for inshore and offshore surveillance.

The United Kingdom fishery protection services are widely recognised as doing a magnificent job and the surveillance and enforcement of fisheries legislation within British fishery limits are among the best in the world.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the application of the Official Secrets Acts in regard to the operation of intervention policies in the storage of food surpluses.

Mr. Gummer: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Food Rationing (Contingency Plans)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's contingency plans for the supply and rationing of food in the event of war together with any expenditure that is being incurred by his Department on preparation for the administration of a rationing system and on stocks of food for human consumption.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Contingency plans for the control and distribution of food in the event of war are developed as part of the normal civil emergency planning functions in my Department. They are summarised in section 11 of the emergency planning guidance issued to local authorities by the Home Office and are the subject of discussions with local authority representatives.

Apart from staff costs, the expenditure on these activities is set out in class IV vote 4 of the 1986-87 Supply Estimates.

Food and Environment Protection Act 1985

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement as to the effectiveness of part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and any circulars issued pursuant to it in dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster; if he proposes to introduce any amending legislation in the light of experience of those consequences; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he proposes to introduce standard training exercises in order to seek to ensure that the provisions of part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 are understood fully by the local authorities concerned in their implementation, and that the place of those provisions in the wider context of emergency procedures is also understood; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he is satisfied with the qualifications and training of investigating officers designated under part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am satisfied that the emergency measures implemented by this Department in the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident worked well. We are participating in a full review of all aspects of the Government's arrangements and will be examining any specific aspects such as the involvement of local authorities as part of that review. Any changes in present emergency arrangements will be notified to those required to implement them.

European Community (Legislation)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether during the summer Adjournment United Kingdom agreement was given to the adoption by the Council of any European Community measure before the European Legislation Committee had considered it.

Mr. Jopling: Yes. The Fisheries Council agreed, as a result of a United Kingdom request, to increase the total allowable catch for Clyde herring from 3,100 tonnes to 3,400 tonnes; and the Agriculture Council adopted with United Kingdom agreement a measure repealing certain retaliatory trade steps against the United States of America following the roll-back agreement between the Community and the United States of America. My right hon. Friend, the Minister of State has explained to the chairman of the committee why he agreed on behalf of the United Kingdom to adoption of these measures and of a number of other items of lesser importance.

The House will also wish to know that the Agriculture Council agreed to devalue the Irish green rate by three points for crops and six points for livestock products before the committee had considered the proposal. The United Kingdom did not vote in favour, but the measure was nonetheless adopted by a qualified majority.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what forestry development is currently proceeding or is in process of preparation within environmentally sensitive areas; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what drainage projects are planned or proceeding on wetland of ecological or environmental attraction within environmentally sensitive areas;

(3) what current developments are taking place within environmentally sensitive areas which he assesses are likely to be injurious to the present character of such areas; and which of these projects are supported by grants from public funds.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *423*]: There may be a number of existing investment projects within environmentally sensitive areas which will need to be reassessed in the light of the designation of these areas. Whilst my Department will honour its commitments where appraisal has already been granted to a project, I have asked my local staff to ensure that where decisions remain to be taken on existing or future works, suppport is given only to those projects which respect the new environmental status of the area.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Appeals

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority in Dorset for each of the last five years *(a)* the number of appeals against planning refusals heard by his Department, *(b)* the total number of houses involved in these appeals, *(c)* the number of appeals, (i) upheld and (ii) rejected, *(d)* the total number of houses involved in *(c)*(i) and *(c)*(ii) and *(e)* the total number of houses involved in *(c)*(i) and *(c)*(ii) expressed as a percentage.

Mr. Tracey: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Archaeological Sites (Development)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses *(a)* when deciding whether building development should be disallowed on archaeological sites and *(b)* when deciding whether to fund archaeological survey or rescue work.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Secretary of State determines each application on its individual merits, following consultation with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission which is his statutory adviser on archaeological matters. Responsibility for funding archaeological surveys or rescue work rests solely with the commission.

Spectrum Arena, Warrington

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how, when and at what price the Spectrum Arena, Birchwood, Warrington was sold by the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation.

Mr. John Patten: The sale of the Spectrum Arena has not been completed.

DEFENCE

Holy Loch

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the United States Naval ship Vega first visited Holy Loch;

(2) what is the purpose of the visits of the United States Naval ship Vega to Holy Loch.

Mr. Stanley: I understand that the USNS Vega began visiting the Holy Loch in 1983 for routine resupply operations.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government on the introduction of facilities at Holy Loch for United States Navy strategic missile submarines armed with the Trident I (C-4) missile;

(2) whether the Government have been informed by the United States authorities of any use of facilities at Holy Loch by United States Navy strategic missile submarines armed with the Trident I (C-4) missile.

Mr. Stanley: Under existing arrangements, United States SSBNs capable of firing Poseidon missiles may use Holy Loch. The question of the use of Holy Loch by Trident I (C-4) armed United States SSBNs has not arisen.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government on the introduction of facilities for United States Navy attack submarines at Holy Loch.

Mr. Stanley: United States Navy attack submarines have made some use of the facilities at Holy Loch for some years under existing arrangements.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what class of missile-firing submarines is supported by the visits of the United States Naval ship Vega to Holy Loch.

Mr. Stanley: I understand that the USNS Vega supports operations conducted by all classes of submarines from the Holy Loch facility by the United States Navy.

Private Education

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will now publish the total amount spent on boarding school allowances to assist service personnel to have their children educated at private schools in Scotland in each year since 1981-82 on account of posting moves at home and overseas;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing for the latest available year the successful applicants by rank whose children are being educated privately at public expense on account of posting moves at home and overseas.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 21 October 1986 at column *822*. Records are not maintained in the form requested and the information could not be provided without disproportionate effort.

Nimrod AEW Aircraft

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what commitments were given to his Department by the French Government or Air Force as to the purchase of Nimrod AEW aircraft, before commercially confidential information about the project was made available to such representatives.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the criteria whereby his Department allowed French Defence Ministry and French Air Force officials to be privy to commercially confidential information in connection with the Nimrod AEW project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Because there are potential savings to be obtained through a joint airborne early warning procurement, the French authorities, with the agreement of both GEC Avionics Ltd. and the Boeing Aerospace company, have been given commercially confidential information about both the systems we are still considering.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he plans to order extra Tornado aircraft for the Royal Air Force as replacements for those originally ordered which formed part of the export contract for the Royal Saudi Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As announced in the RAF debate on 26 February at column 960, agreement has been reached with British Aerospace that the Tornados being diverted to the Royal Saudi air force will be replaced at no cost to the defence budget.

Nimrod

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the Nimrod AEW mission system avionics are now operating at an acceptable standard;

(2) what is his assessment of the present efficiency of the GEC Avionics Radar in the AEW Nimrod programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 November 1986, c. *432*]: We are assessing the merits of each of the two remaining contenders as part of the current AEW competition which is now nearing its final stages.

Nuclear Reporting Cells

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Observer Corps in Wales has established any nuclear reporting cells in conjunction with armed forces headquarters.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 November 1986]: The locations of the Royal Observer Corps nuclear reporting cells are classified.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the intended functions of Royal Observer Corps nuclear reporting cells before and after a supposed nuclear attack.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, on 6 November 1986]: The function of the nuclear reporting cells is to provide details on nuclear bursts and assessments and advice on the path and intensity of fallout.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Dundee University (Engineering and Science Graduates)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the number of graduates in the faculties of engineering and science at Dundee university in each of the past five years.

Mr. Walden: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Teachers' Salaries (Departmental Document)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total cost of the production and posting to each state school of his document concerning teachers' salaries.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The total cost is estimated to be about £50,000.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Plastic Baton Rounds

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the occasions on which he has been asked since 1979 to use his powers under the Police Act 1964 so as to allow for the possession of plastic baton rounds by a police force in England and Wales; what was the police force involved in each case; and if he will state the nature of his response in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: To date there has been one occasion on which, under the procedure set out in my reply of 19 May 1986 to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) at columns *15-16*, a chief constable has asked the Department to supply baton rounds following a refusal by the police authority to authorise purchase. The force concerned was the West Yorkshire police. The baton rounds were supplied.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from members of police authorities against the possession of plastic baton rounds by their police force; and if he will state the police force concerned in each case and the nature of his response.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since we announced the setting up of a central store of plastic baton rounds and CS equipment on 19 May 1986, we have received representations either against the central store arrangements, or against the use of baton rounds generally, from the police authorities for Cleveland, Gwent, Merseyside, Northumbria, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. The responses have varied according to the particular points raised. The representations made have not caused us to change the policy announced in the replies of 26 November 1985 to a Question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) at columns *515-16* and 19 May 1986 to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) at columns *15-16*.

Security Industry (Controls)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from the Institute of Professional Investigators advocating statutory controls over the security industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Six hon. Members have very recently written enclosing correspondence from the Institute of Professional Investigators, or from companies and investigators who are members of the institute, advocating statutory control to support self-regulation.

We fully understand the desire on the part of the Institute of Professional Investigators for proper regulation of its profession. We do not agree with its view that such regulation should be by statute. We shall continue to support and encourage self-regulation for professional investigators as we do for the private security industry.

Irish Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from the National Association of Probation Officers about the transfer of Irish prisoners from England to Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have received no such representations.

Children

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prosecutions were instituted in each year since 1975 in respect of the murder or manslaughter of children; and how many such prosecutions each year were against a parent or step-parent of the victim;

(2) how many convictions were secured in each year since 1975 in respect of the murder or manslaughter of children; and how many such convictions were of a parent or step-parent of the victim;

(3) how many children were murdered in each year since 1975;

(4) how many convictions were secured in each year since 1975 in respect of sexual offences against children; and how many such convictions in each year were of a parent or step-parent of the victim;

(5) how many prosecutions were instituted in each year since 1975 in respect of sexual offences against children; and how many such prosecutions each year were against a parent or step-parent of the victim;

(6) how many convictions were secured in each year since 1975 in respect of assaults on children; and how many such convictions in each year were of a parent or step-parent of the victim;

(7) how many prosecutions were instituted in each year since 1975 for assaults on children; and what was the number of such prosecutions each year against a parent or step-parent of the victim.

Mr. Mellor: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Police Patrols (London)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the frequency with which *(a)* Warrior square, London E12 and *(b)* the Little Ilford estate is patrolled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the Little Ilford estate is patrolled by two home beat officers working overlapping shifts of 8 am-4 pm and 2 pm-10 pm. Patrol cars based at Forest Gate police station also visit the estate from time to time. Warrior square is part of the Little Ilford estate and no separate arrangements are made for it.

Operation Condor

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what quantities of heroin, cocaine and cannabis were seized in consequence of Operation Condor in Brixton on 24 July.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 300·12g of cannabis resin, 905·59g of herbal cannabis, 33·69g of cocaine and 42mg of heroin were seized by police during the course of Operation Condor.

Litter (Prosecutions)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were brought against people for litter offences for each year of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Copyright Material (Blank Cassettes)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were brought against people for copying copyrighted materials on to blank cassettes for each year of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Crown Court Sentencing Practice

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals concerning Crown court sentencing practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Most sentences passed by the courts are in line with what the public expect. For less serious offences, specially those not involving violence, sentences should clearly be no more severe than necessary, and full use should be made of sensible alternatives to custody. But there is a small minority of sentences for serious offences which are widely regarded as unduly lenient. This can damage public confidence disproportionately. The main guarantees of high sentencing standards are the good sense of the judges and the guidance provided by the Court of Appeal. I welcome the Court's willingness to extend and develop its guidance, and the steps which are being taken to make that guidance more accessible to sentencers. I do not at present think it necessary to take forward the suggestion in the White Paper on Criminal Justice legislation (Cmnd. 9658) that the publication and dissemination of the guidelines by the Judicial Studies Board should be put on a statutory basis.

I am, however, persuaded that there is a case for reinforcing the Court of Appeal's role by providing a means by which the issues raised in individual cases can be ventilated and the correct sentencing principles laid down. I therefore intend to include in the Criminal Justice Bill a procedure under which the Attorney General would be able to draw cases to the attention of the Court of Appeal, thus enabling the Court to state or reaffirm the principles which should be applied in any future case of a similar character. The procedure would be similar to that proposed during the passage of the Prosecution of Offences Bill. As with the earlier proposal, the sentence of an offender whose case was the subject of the new procedure would not be affected. Unlike that proposal, however, it would be confined to cases which in the Attorney-General's view raised sentencing issues of public importance.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Foreign and Commonwealth Questions

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Lord Privy Seal whether any revision is proposed for the arrangements for Foreign and Commonwealth Office questions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The experiment for Foreign and Commonwealth questions introduced last year on 22 March 1985 at column 624-5 whereby oral questions to Foreign and Commonwealth Ministers were no longer divided between those relating to European Community affairs and those relating to the rest of the world, has been

concluded. Following consultations through the usual channels it has been decided that the new arrangements be made permanent and that this will take effect with the introduction of the new questions roster.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chile

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the burning by military personnel of Rodrigo Rojas and Carmen Gloria Quintana in Chile on 2 July; and if he will make representations to the Chilean ambassador.

Mr. Eggar: Investigations by the Chilean military prosecutor into this atrocity are continuing. One army lieutenant has been charged with using unnecessary violence, which led to the death of Sr Rojas and serious injury to Srta Quintana.

We have made strong representations to the Chilean ambassador and to the Chilean Foreign Minister in Santiago, and have urged that the Chilean authorities publish soon the full facts of the case.

Refugees

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the treatment of refugees destined for the United Kingdom during their period of detention in Thailand.

Mrs. Chalker: Refugees leaving Indo-China are not detained in Thailand. Thailand responds in a humane manner by offering first asylum to Indo-Chinese fleeing their countries. These refugees are housed in camps under the auspices of the United Nations High Commmissioner for Refugees. Conditions in the camps are adequate in terms of shelter, food, health care and security. Any with a claim to resettlement in third countries, including the United Kingdom, are screened in the camps to determine whether they meet the resettlement criteria.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made about the problems of piracy faced by refugees in the South China sea.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue our full support for the anti-piracy programme run jointly by the Thai Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We have pledged a further £70,000 for the programme in 1986-87, and have also provided the services of a Royal Navy officer to report on how the efficiency of the programme can be improved.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of refugees escaping from Vietnam each month; as to how many perish at sea; and as to how many are victims of piracy.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not know the fate of all those who leave Vietnam by boat. However statistics show that in the first eight months of 1986 around 20,000 refugees arrived in south-east Asia by boat. Over 1,600 in the first six months of 1986 were rescued at sea. Of the refugees boats arriving in Thailand, the proportion which have suffered attacks by pirates has fallen steadily to around 20 per cent. We cannot tell how many refugees are lost at sea.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial or other assistance he is prepared to give to Christian Care Projects' efforts to provide a boat in the South China sea to rescue refugees who escape by boat from Vietnam.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received no request from Christian Care Projects for assistance. If asked, we would provide no support. Such "mercy ships", though well intentioned, exacerbate the problem, encouraging more Vietnamese to risk their lives by setting out in unseaworthy craft with no guarantee of making contact. We shall continue to support more effective responses to the problem, such as the orderly departure programme and the rescue at sea resettlement offers programme.

Falkland Islands

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the number of fishing vessels active in the waters bounded by the newly promulgated fishing limits around the Falklands.

Mr. Eggar: Some 600 vessels were sighted fishing in the Falkland Islands protection zone during the main 1986 squid fishing season which ended in June. For 1987 the Falkland Islands Government will be aiming to reduce significantly the numbers of vessels targeting squid in the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone.

Detailed licensing arrangements will be drawn up shortly.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether, during the course of discussions with the Soviet Union over the last six months on the subject of the south Atlantic fisheries, the Soviet Union objected to the imposition of the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone;

(2) whether he has received any response from the Soviet Government or their representatives in London on the question of Her Majesty's Government's establishment of the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone.

Mr. Eggar: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member on 6 November.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he expects any difficulties with the Soviet Union or other East European countries to arise following upon his decision to establish the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone.

Mr. Eggar: It is in the interests of all the fishing nations and fleets including those of the Soviet Union and other East European states to co-operate in orderly functioning of the interim conservation and management zone.

Human Rights

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is meant by the term European partners in the EEC Council statement on human rights.

Mrs. Chalker: In the declaration on human rights issued by the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve in Brussels on 21 July 1986 the term European partners refers to the member states of the European Community.

Diplomatic Staff (Children's Education)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much money the Government have paid to independent and grant-aided schools in Scotland in each year since 1980-81 as boarding allowances for the education of the children of diplomatic staff;

(2) how many children of diplomatic staff have been educated and boarded at independent and grant-aided schools in Scotland under his Department's finance in each year since 1983.

Mr. Eggar: The detailed information of this nature is not available in the form requested. It is not required for administrative or accounting purposes and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the response of Her Majesty's embassy in Washington to inquiries about the United States investigation of Systime plc initiated by the United States Department of Commerce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It is not clear what inquiries the hon. Member has in mind. At the request of Systime plc we did not intervene in the US Department of Commerce action against the company. However, a formal protest was made to the US authorities on 26 June 1986.

Chile (Police Visit)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department gave assistance in arranging the recent visit to Britain by senior Chilean police officers to study radio equipment manufactured by Pye.

Mr. Eggar: No.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Food Imports

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the implications of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill for the control of food imports into the United Kingdom with particular reference to the maintenance of existing public health standards.

Mrs. Currie: I am satisfied that the Bill will not affect our ability to maintain public health standards.

Children in Care

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of children in the London borough of Newham are in local authority care; and what is the national figure.

Mrs. Currie: There were 520 children in care, which equates to 9·7 children in care per thousand population under 18 in the London borough of Newham as at 31 March 1984; the equivalent figure for England was 6·5. These are the latest figures available.

Social Services Expenditure (Newham)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for social Services what is the per capita expenditure on social services in the London borough of Newham; and what is the national figure.

Mrs. Currie: Gross personal social services current expenditure in 1984-85, the latest year for which full details of actual spending are available, was £96 per capita in the London borough of Newham and £56 per capita nationally.

Hospital Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospital accident and emergency departments which will have been closed in each year since 1979, showing respectively which have closed permanently and which have closed temporarily.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not available centrally.

Child Abuse

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money his Department allocated in 1985-86 and 1986-87 for local authorities to help in the fight against child abuse; for which local authorities; and for which projects.

Mrs. Currie: Local authority services for children are mainly funded through the rate support grant system and it is for individual local authorities to determine how the money should be distributed between the services for which they are responsible.

On 30 October to help with child abuse training projects for professional staff and telephone counselling services we announced grants of £400,000, part of which sum will be spent in 1986-87. The training projects will be based at The National Children's Bureau under the aegis of the training advisory group on the sexual abuse of children and at the department of psychological medicine at the Hospital for Sick Children at Great Ormond Street. The two counselling services are Touchline, based in Leeds and run by the National Children's Home, and Child Line.

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many children were removed from the family home in each year since 1975 by reason of abuse by their parents or step-parents;

(2) how many cases of child abuse by parents or step-parents were reported to social services departments in each year since 1975.

Mrs. Currie: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Forrest Report

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the Forrest report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the expert group on breast cancer screening chaired by Professor Sir Patrick Forrest has almost completed its report and that we shall receive it very shortly.

Project Smoke Free

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to public funds of Project Smoke Free; what information he has on *(a)* its objectives, *(b)* how many people it employs and on what salaries and *(c)* on the rateable value of its offices; and how many meetings he has had with its officers in the last year.

Mrs. Currie: Project Smoke Free is a three-year project in north-west England which commenced in June 1985 with the objectives of helping people give up smoking, encouraging schoolchildren not to take up the habit and providing more non-smoking facilities in indoor public places. The scheme, which will be fully evaluated, is funded jointly by the Health Education Council (£200,000 pa) and the North-Western regional health authority (£70,000 pa) from whose premises it is run. The project employs six people on salaries of £14,800 (1), £10,490 (1), £9,290(1), £7,040 (2) and £4,360 (1). We have not yet met the officers, but hope to do so.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the change in the death rate from cervical cancer since 1965; and what was the equivalent change between 1960 and 1965.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the age-specific mortality rates per million population for malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri for England and Wales for 1960, 1965 and 1985, and the average annual percentage change in these rates between 1960 and 1965, and between 1965 and 1985.

Age-specific mortality rates per million population for Malignant Neoplasm of Cervix Uteri (ICD[1] (7) 171, (9) 180), 1960, 1965, 1985; average annual percentage change 1960-65, 1965-85, England and Wales

Age-group	Year				
	1960 Rate[2]	1965 Rate[2]	1985 Rate[2]	1960-65 Average annual percentage change	1965-85 Average annual percentage change
15-24	0·3	0·9	1·3	27·3	1·9
25-34	21	11	32	– 7·9	9·1
35-44	109	105	68	– 0·6	–1·7
45-54	183	192	93	0·8	–2·5
55-64	192	198	158	0·5	–1·0
65-74	279	217	195	– 3·7	–0·5
75-84	356	272	197	– 3·9	–1·3
85 and over	370	344	206	– 1·2	–1·9

[1] International Classification of Diseases 7th, 9th revisions.
[2] per million population.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the number of deaths from cervical cancer for each year since 1973 to the present time.

Mrs. Currie: The information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths with underlying cause as Malignant Neoplasm of Cervix Uteri (ICD[1] (8, 9) 180) 1973-1985 England and Wales

Year	Number of deaths
1973	2,249
1974	2,068
1975	2,143
1976	2,206
1977	2,145
1978	2,153
1979	2,087
1980	2,068
1981	2,017
1982	1,932
1983	1,959
1984	1,899
1985	1,957

[1] International Classification of Diseases 8th, 9th revisions.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the change in the rate of positive smears for cervical cancer since 1973.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Cervical Cytology England and Wales

Year	Postive smears per thousand examined	Index (1973 = 100)
1973	4·3	100
1974	4·7	109
1975	4·8	112
1976	5·2	121
1977	5·9	137
1978	6·3	147
1979	6·3	147
1980	6·8	158
1981	7·1	165
1982	7·6	177
1983	7·8	181
1984	8·9	207
1985	9·2	214

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost of the present cervical cancer smear test campaign; and what assessment he has made of the cost of providing for screening at three-yearly intervals.

Mrs. Currie: Expenditure on cervical cancer screening is not separately identified in health authority accounts. It is estimated that the current cost is in the range of £20 million to £30 million. A change to three-yearly screening for all women aged 20-64 years might increase expenditure by some £10 million to £15 million.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the anticipated annual change in cervical cancer cases between the current time and 1996;

(2) what is the estimated number of deaths from cervical cancer for each year between the current time and 1996.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available. We are pursuing vigorously policies to reduce the rate of incidence and of deaths from cervical cancer.

Nuclear War (Casualties)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to issue guidance to health authorities about which categories of people will be allowed treatment for injuries after a nuclear war and who will not.

Mrs. Currie: After any disaster the responsibility for sorting of casualties and allocation of priorities for treatment lies with doctors or ambulance personnel attending the injured at the material time. This principle applies in both peacetime and wartime emergencies.

We are at present considering revised guidance on civil defence planning in the National Health Service but it will not attempt to categorise casualties. Planning officers who will respond to the guidance are aware that this is a matter for professional judgment in the light of particular circumstances.

London Teaching Hospitals

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that where London teaching hospitals are providing services for many patients from outside the region which allocates their resources extra funds will be provided.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Westminster Hospital Pacemaker Unit

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange for the National Health Service Management Board to review the future of the Westminster hospital pacemaker unit and examine the funding of the unit in the light of the level of referrals from outside the region.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects that the date of payment of the Christmas bonus for retired pensioners for 1987 and subsequent years will be announced.

Mr. Major: It is planned to pay the Christmas bonus for 1987 and future years on the pension pay day in the week beginning with the first Monday in December (Schedule 6, paragraph 1(3) of the Social Security Act 1986 refers).

Cystic Fibrosis

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent improvements have been made in the treatment of cystic fibrosis; and how many regional or sub-regional specialty centres for cystic fibrosis are in operation.

Mrs. Currie: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

NHS (In-house Contracts)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many cases heath authority auditors have monitored the performance of "in-house" contracts; and in how many cases they have reported cost over-runs.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to my hon. Frend.

Maternity Allowance and Grants

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provisions there are for ensuring that mothers who give birth to premature infants will get their maternity allowance and grants at the time of birth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Children (Special Units)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what provisions there are for giving assistance to mothers whose children are hospitalised in special units far from home who must travel to be near their children; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if there are any plans to modify the existing benefits structure to allow mothers of prematurely born infants to collect their child benefits more easily;

(3) what provisions there are for mothers whose children are hospitalised in special units far from home for grants or an allowance to enable the mothers to stay close to their children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Strikers (Supplementary Benefit)

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the deduction from the supplementary benefit payable for the dependants of strikers will be increased at the time of the uprating of benefits in April 1987.

Mr. John Major: The deduction will not be increased on this occasion and will therefore remain at £17.

TRANSPORT

Manchester Airport

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received representations from the authorities concerned at Manchester airport since the recent disaster on the availability of adequate facilities for dealing with fire hazards in the event of aircraft accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: No. The requirements for fire fighting facilities at Manchester airport are a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority has informed me that it, too, has received no representations from the authorities at Manchester, but that the facilities at Manchester exceed the minimum required—as they did at the time of the tragic accident last year.

British Rail (Subsidies)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from south-east region commuters' organisations concerning the reduction of Government subsidies to British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have had one letter referred to me from a travellers' association and a number of others from individual members of the public. I can reassure them and my hon. Friend that the reduction we are seeking in subsidy by 1989-90 from Network South East and the provincial sector is a modest 8 per cent. This amounts to

a saving of only 4 per cent. of costs over three years. At the same time our new objectives require an increased quality of service; and we are supporting major investments in new rolling stock, electrification, station refurbishment, the improvement of passenger information systems and speeding the issue of tickets. Our commitment to developing a reliable, efficient and modern railway serving the needs of commuters is clear.

British Rail (Investment)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the levels of capital investment by British Rail in *(a)* new rolling stock and *(b)* electrification, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information my hon. Friend requests is not readily available. I will write to him shortly.

European Road Safety Year (Exhibition)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the European Road Safety Year to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the Authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 17 November to 21 November.

My right hon. Friend looks forward to opening the exhibition on 17 November.

Uranium Hexafluoride

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations govern the use of hazchem signs in connection with the transportation of uranium hexafluoride.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Hazard warning panels must be displayed by road vehicles carrying in bulk the substances specified in Part I of the authorised and approved list issued under the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981. These regulations do not cover the transport of uranium hexafluoride, which must be labelled in accordance with the regulations of the International Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations and safety conditions apply to the transportation of uranium hexafluoride.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The regulations and conditions for the transport of all radioactive materials in this country (including UF6) are based on the internationally accepted standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency Safety Series No. 6. A copy is held in the Library. For United Kingdom road consignments these are given effect by the following:

The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) Great Britain Regulations 1974 (SI 1974 No. 1735) and Amendment Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1729).

The Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) Northern Ireland Regulations 1983 (SR 1983 No. 344) and Amendment Regulations 1986 (SR 1986 No. 61).

The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1333).

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether emergency services are advised when transport of uranium hexafluoride is taking place, and how to deal with the substance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The emergency services do not receive prior notification of the transport of uranium hexafluoride, as the relevant regulations require safeguards to be incorporated in the design of the containers in which the material is carried. This ensures that even a severe accident could not give rise to a significant release of radioactivity. Nevertheless, in the event of an accident or incident, expert radiological advice is rapidly available to emergency services through the NAIR scheme (national arrangements for incidents involving radioactivity), details of which have been circulated to local authorities, police, fire and ambulance services by the Home Office.

Roads (Archaeological Sites)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria he uses when deciding whether new roads should be rerouted around archaeological sites; and whether there have been cases in which his Department has funded archaeological survey of rescue work in these circumstances.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Buses

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many services registered under the Transport Act 1985 and which were due to come into operation on 26 or 27 October did not in fact operate.

Mr. David Mitchell: Although some initial teething problems with the new system of bus registration were inevitable I am pleased to say that no major examples of services failing to operate have come to my attention. Where continuing problems have arisen they will be thoroughly investigated by the Traffic Commissioners.

Hazardous Goods (HGV Drivers)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many heavy goods vehicle drivers are employed in the transportation of hazardous goods.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not record this information.

HGV Licences

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people hold heavy goods vehicle licences; and what information he has as to how many of them were in employment at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Moore: About 850,000 people are currently licensed in Great Britain to drive heavy goods vehicles. Of these, about 75,000 are in the Armed Forces; apart from those, I have no information on the extent to which these licences are held by people whose principal occupation is not heavy goods vehicle driving. On the basis of the latest readily available Labour Force Survey for Great Britain (1984), the Department of Employment estimates that

430,000 people are in employment as drivers of road goods vehicles: this probably includes some who drive vehicles below the 7·5 tonne threshold of the heavy goods scheme.

Barnetby Top-Redbourne Link

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has given the go-ahead to Humberside county council for the construction of the A15, Barnetby top/Redbourne link; if funding for this project is now available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have already given approval in principle to this scheme for grant purposes. Progress depends on the council obtaining confirmation of the necessary orders. I understand that these are to be published soon. A public inquiry may be necessary before any decision can be taken.

London Regional Transport

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if London Regional Transport has any plans to publish a full current timetable for its bus and its railway operations respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The manner and form in which timetables for bus and Underground services are published are matters for London Regional Transport.

Marine Pilotage

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received from the Scottish Guild of Pilots about proposals permitting foreign vessels to enter United Kingdom coastal areas without the services of a qualified pilot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have recently received a representation from the Scottish Guild of Pilots on a number of points concerning the Government's proposals to reform the present administration of marine pilotage. Under present legislation pilotage exemption certificates, permitting vessels to navigate in an area of compulsory pilotage without the services of a licensed pilot, may be granted only to EC nationals and only in respect of vessels registered under the law of an EC Member State. Under the proposals for new legislation which we intend to bring forward as soon as possible, these restrictions, for which there is no justification in terms of safety of navigation, will be removed. However it will of course remain necessary for applicants for certificates to satisfy the issuing authority that their skill, experience and local knowledge are such that they can safely navigate in the area concerned.

Racal-Decca Navigator

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the future of the Racal-Decca navigator system for shipping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The Racal-Decca navigator system is an important marine navigational aid in the waters around the British Isles. It provides highly accurate position-fixing signals that can be picked up by purpose-built receivers. For well over 30 years Racal-Decca (and the Decca Company before it) recovered the cost of this service from the rentals of receivers. In recent years, however, advances in technology have made it feasible for other manufacturers to sell relatively low-cost receivers, so eroding Racal-Decca's rental revenue. Racal-Decca decided earlier this year that this loss would quite shortly make it impossible for it to continue to provide the service on the previous basis. After extensive discussions with my Department it was agreed in principle that the company would be prepared to continue to run UK transmitters to the same high technical standard as hitherto under the superintendence of the General Lighthouse Authorities and as a charge to the General Lighthouse Fund. The agreement envisaged that this arrangement would last initially for seven years, with an option to extend for a further three years. An important element of the agreement is that the company, as it has already announced, will no longer require that its receivers should be rented: they will be freely sold (as will those of other manufacturers). The detailed terms of the arrangements will be the subject of a contract at present under negotiation between the company and the authorities. A pre-requisite of the authorities entering into such a contract is that their statutory functions should be extended to include superintendence and management of the navigator system. For this purpose I will lay an order early in the new Session which, subject to Affirmative Resolution by both Houses, would enable the new arrangements to take effect from 1 January 1987.

Nothing in these arrangements affects any of the contractual commitments bearing on the navigator system that Racal-Decca has with marine authorities in many other parts of the world.

Rail Barrier, Cranswick

Mr. John Townend asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will request British Rail not to proceed with work on the installation of an automatic half-barrier at the Cranswick railway crossing until the findings of the independent inquiry on the safety of unmanned crossings is published.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. For the reasons given in the letter I sent to my hon. Friend on 17 September, the terms of reference of the independent inquiry, and the ban on the installation of new crossings, apply only to automatic open crossings.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of persons registered unemployed in the St. Helens area at the last date available.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 11 September 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the St. Helens local authority area was 15,145.

Community Programme

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of persons registered on community programme placements in the St. Helens area at the last date available.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to give information in the form requested. However, at the end of September, the latest date for which statistics are available, there were 4,649 people employed on community programmes in the Merseyside outer area. This includes the Metropolitan borough council area of Knowsley, Sefton and St. Helens.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General if, further to the answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, column *215*, he will give details of the 10 community programme projects with improved funding referred to therein.

Mr. Trippier: We are not yet able to give details of the 10 community programme projects with improved funding. Proposals are being discussed between officials and potential project sponsors.

Benefits (St. Helens)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of persons in St. Helens who have had their benefits suspended for failure to attend restart interviews at the latest date available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Up to 9 October 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, 28 people in St. Helens had been disallowed unemployment or supplementary benefit for failure to attend restart interviews.

Social security and supplementary benefit law has always provided for disallowance of unemployment or supplementary benefit where an unemployed person fails without good cause to attend an interview about employment to which he has been twice invited. The disallowance continues to such time as he or she does attend. Twenty-five of these people have now attended an interview and had benefit reinstated.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General (1) what is the total number of persons being seen on an average day by benefit offices conducting availability testing interviews in the St. Helens area;

(2) what is the total number of persons whose benefit has been terminated or suspended as a result of interviews conducted on the availability test in the St. Helens area;

(3) if he will make it his policy to advise claimants interviewed on the availability test in the St. Helens area to seek independent advice before completion of the questionnaire.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The unemployment benefit office at St. Helens did not take part in the experimental testing of availability for work other than keeping statistics for comparison purposes. Therefore, there were no suspensions or disallowances on availability grounds arising out of the experiment although the usual procedure followed by all offices would identify some cases of doubtful availability in the normal way.

In the past claimants have not been advised to seek independent advice before completion of claim forms and we have no intention of changing this policy.

Inner City Projects

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General if he will list the 34 inner city pilot projects mentioned in his answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, column *214*.

Mr. Trippier: The 34 inner city projects for which my right hon. and learned Friend has approved task force support are:

(1) The Coach House Bristol, a small business centre
(2) Handsworth technical college, a personal services workshop
(3) Business Action Team Project, Handsworth, supporting local businesses
(4) A feasibility project for a shop selling ethnic cultural items in Leeds
(5) Positive action training in housing (PATH) in Leeds, providing training in professional services
(6) Michael Peters group design consultancy, Middlesbrough, a design and marketing consultancy advising local firms
(7) "Black Business in Birmingham", a local enterprise agency
(8) "Education for Enterprise" promoting education for enterprise in local schools
(9) "Head Start in Inner Cities" enterprise training for young people by the industrial society
(10) Macro Films, Handsworth, a video/film training workshop
(11) Handsworth opportunities programme for employment (HOPE), capital support for a community programme project in construction work
(12) Carnival Industry Project, North Kensington, supporting the Notting Hill Carnival
(13) Cleveland Youth Business Centre in Middlesbrough, providing enterprise training and managed workspace
(14) The Association of Marine and Related Charities (AMARC) Ltd, a training agency in Middlesbrough
(15) Technorth, a feasibility study to set up a nursery in Leeds
(16) Portobello Trust, North Kensington, offering grants and loans to young business people
(17) Project Fullemploy in North Kensington: provision of new computer equipment
(18) Feasibility study for a co-operative shop on the Gloucester Grove Estate in North Peckham
(19) Consultancy study for the ISWE foundation's proposed food distribution service in Highfields, Leicester
(20) Support for Notting Hill Housing Trust seminar on Ventures in Community Improvement (VICI)
(21) Fielden House Productivity Centre Ltd, a project training potential community programme supervisors in Moss Side
(22) Lozells Road shopping scheme, Handsworth, a redevelopment and refurbishment scheme
(23) All Hallows Community Education Centre, Bristol to expand its range of training schemes
(24) Refurbishment of St. Pauls adventure playground, Bristol
(25) Expansion of St. Werburgh's city farm, Bristol
(26) The Inkworks, Bristol, a community project needing additional full-time staff
(27) All Nations Foundation Community Builders Ltd., Bristol, a co-operative firm providing employment and training in building work, seeking to expand its operations
(28) Refurbishment of Stapletown Road congregational church hall, Bristol, for use as a community centre
(29) Equipping of office premises for Bristol black business association
(30) Support for improved training at Chapeltown community workshops, Leeds
(31) Support for Opportunities Industrialisation Centre (OIC) UK Ltd in Handsworth to develop its programme of training, outreach and placement for alienated young people
(32) Feasibility study for Handsworth Asian business centre
(33) Support for "Outward bound" in Handsworth
(34) South Highfields and Vulcan road boundary walls Scheme, a local building project.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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